

Ghali, Kabariti meet at U.N.

NEW YORK (Petra) — United Nations Secretary General Boutros Ghali on Wednesday met with Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti in the presence of Jordan's permanent representative at the U.N. Adnan Abu Odeh. Dr. Ghali and Mr. Kabariti discussed issues related to moving the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from Vienna to Gaza. Mr. Kabariti voiced concern over the deterioration in services offered by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees as a result of the transfer of its headquarters. The minister also voiced his fear that the transfer would also lead to denying refugees outside the Gaza Strip of services offered by UNRWA. Discussion at the meeting also focused on Jordan's role in peacekeeping operations in various parts of the world and pulling out U.N. troops from Croatia. Mr. Kabariti also discussed with the U.N. secretary general the issue of increasing Jordan's share of posts in the U.N. and other international agencies, urging the U.N. to fill the vacant post of director of the U.N. Development Programme with an Arab candidate.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرائي

Volume 19 Number 5846

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16-17, 1995, RAMADAN 16-17, 1415

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Jordan will pursue quest for comprehensive peace

HM says Jordan has no ambitions outside its land, peace era requires normalisation of ties with Israel; situation in occupied territories is worrying

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has stressed that the Kingdom will persevere in its pursuit of Mideast peace as the only alternative for the whole region despite difficulties facing other tracks of Arab negotiations with Israel.

Speaking to representatives of the foreign press Tuesday evening, King Hussein said that "forces of darkness" are trying to destroy the peace process through acts of violence but said that Jordan will do all it can to prevent them from achieving their goals.

"(These times are) times of promise...and consolidation of what has been achieved" through the peace process and extremists should not be allowed to jeopardise these achievements because the majority of the people want peace, King Hussein told reporters at the Ma'wa Palace.

The King said the divide that used to separate the Arabs and Israel has been

replaced by a new divide between the opponents and proponents of peace.

"We are disturbed when opponents of peace, the extremists, create conditions which jeopardise what (has been) achieved. There is the camp of peace, one that is comprehensive and promising, and the camp of those who would like to destroy it," the King said.

While saying that conditions "of hunger, despair and anger" might lead to violence, the King said that "acts of violence are perpetrated by organisations."

"It is not the right of those who perpetrate acts of violence to claim that they are the only Muslims, the King said.

"I believe it is our duty to distance ourselves from those who distort the image of Islam," the King said.

Reiterating the Kingdom's commitment to the Oct. 26 peace treaty with Israel, King Hussein said Jordan is looking at ways to speed up "progress in country...in line with the peace treaty."

"We will live up to the peace treaty in word and deed," the King said, adding that peace is the only alternative, not only for Jordan but also for others in the region.

King Hussein noted that it was significant that the treaty also has the support of the majority in Israel, saying that its conclusion contributed to the strengthening of forces of peace in the Jewish state.

But, the King said, the difficulties facing the Palestinian-Israeli talks are negatively affecting supporters of peace in Israel.

"I have a feeling that those sticking their necks out for peace (in Israel) have challenges...I hope they will succeed," said the Monarch.

Addressing concerns by some that peace has been slow to bring about the desired changes, His Majesty said that after 47 years of "disaster and instability" changes will take time to materialise.

On the controversial issue of "normalisation" with Israel, King Hussein questioned the basis of the concept of cold peace, saying that Jordan will not force anybody to normalise ties with Israel but those who oppose it should not be able to prevent others from doing so.

"Peace opens the doors for people to see the human face of the other," the King said. He said achieving the economic prosperity that people expected from peace would require that Jordanians and Israelis deal with each other to realise the economic opportunities of the new era.

The King said he hoped Syria and Lebanon will be able to achieve progress on their tracks of the negotiations with Israel, noting that all parties to the peace talks started from the same point and Jordan reached the peace treaty with Israel "because it felt the need, the urgency and the right to move."

There was a will and a determination to move towards peace, the King told the reporters during the meeting, which was attended by Her Majesty Queen Noor, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid

Ben Shaker, members of the royal family and other officials.

The King said that "Syria is very, very important in the area," and the comprehensive peace that the Kingdom seeks on the basis of U.N. resolutions 338 and 242 would require that Syria too reaches peace with Israel.

But the deteriorating situation in the West Bank and Gaza was worrying to the King even though he said his view is not the "dark" one adopted by some newspapers' columnists.

"We are worried and concerned about conditions" in the occupied territories and at the Palestinian-Israeli track of the negotiations, the King said, expressing hope that difficulties will be overcome.

But King Hussein said that he will not apportion blame on one party for the difficulties facing the negotiations.

"Taking a totally negative attitude cannot help" improve the situation and both sides "have a problem, have a responsibility to get us all

off this point," His Majesty said.

"It is almost an impossible (situation) but we hope it will be solved," King Hussein told reporters.

The King said "the violence that is occurring" is defeating the purpose of having the interim period between the initial and final negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians prepare the people psychologically for the final status.

But King Hussein said Jordan will not interfere in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. "Jordan has no place in this issue because it is a Palestinian issue and the Palestinian leadership is dealing with it."

The King said nothing can hurt Jordanian-Palestinian relations more than "even the suggestion" of the Kingdom interfering in the affairs of the Palestinians.

The King said he has made it clear to all concerned that the Kingdom will not discuss the form of the final rela-

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Israel to name Shimon Shamir as envoy to Jordan

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel has named professor Shimon Shamir as its first ambassador to Jordan, after the two countries signed a peace treaty in October, Israeli radio reports said Wednesday. The appointment will only be official after a foreign ministry committee and the Israeli cabinet approve it. The foreign ministry would not confirm the appointment. However, following a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Mr. Peres said the ambassador would be appointed this week. "Regarding the appointment of the ambassador to Jordan, I hope this will be done by the end of this week," Mr. Peres said on the podium of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Mr. Shamir, a Middle Eastern studies professor at Tel Aviv University, served as Israel's ambassador to Egypt for three years, beginning in 1986. Both Israel and army radio channels said Mr. Rabin and Mr. Peres had decided on Mr. Shamir during their meeting on Wednesday. The appointment had been delayed following a disagreement between the two over the appointment.



No decision yet on World Bank office

AMMAN (R) — Jordan said on Wednesday it had not decided yet whether to allow the World Bank to set up a regional office in Amman.

"This issue is expected to be discussed by the council of ministers sometime in the next two weeks," Planning Minister Kima Khalaf told Reuters. The World Bank had suggested a regional office in Jordan to study projects related mostly to infrastructure, water and the environment which have become possible with increased prospects of peace in the Middle East.

U.S. has no new ideas, Syria says

DAMASCUS (AFP) — U.S. officials have failed to come up with any fresh ideas to achieve a breakthrough in the Middle East peace talks, Syria's Ambassador to Washington Walid Mualeem said Wednesday. Mr. Mualeem, quoted by the official Syrian news agency SANA, said: "I have not yet found any American ideas which will get peace negotiations moving between Syria and Israel. They (the Americans) said they had ideas, which I am still waiting to see, and this week we can begin" to study them. The ambassador returned to Syria in late December after talks with his Israeli counterpart Itamar Rabinovich in Washington which Damascus said failed to produce results. Mr. Mualeem returned to his post in Washington on Feb. 6 for talks with U.S. officials.

Fateh opponents set up new group

CAIRO (AFP) — Opponents of the Palestinian-Israeli autonomy deal have set up a new group called the Democratic National Rally, a senior member of Yasser Arafat's Fateh faction said Wednesday. Fathi Al Hassan, a member of Fateh's central committee, told the London-based newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat the new group aimed to "wreck the policy of those who support the accord." The group included members of Fateh and of the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP and DFLP), the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and independent figures. Mr. Hassan said Palestinians were going through a crisis which called for "a policy based on both confrontation and negotiation" with Israel.

Israel says W. Bank pullout possible in May

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — A senior Israeli peace negotiator said on Wednesday that although talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) were at a "low point" a long-delayed army pullout from occupied West Bank cities and towns could take place in May.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, a senior figure in crisis-ridden talks with the PLO, told Israel Radio:

"I still believe that (Palestinian) elections in the territories can take place along with an army redeployment in another few months, and personally, the month of May looks like a reasonable target date, despite all the delays."

Mr. Sarid said Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who will meet on Thursday at Israel's border with self-ruled Gaza, will discuss recent efforts by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to curb guerrilla attacks, the Jewish state's condition for going ahead with the withdrawal.

"They will weigh the balance of the last weeks since the grave disaster at Beit Lid (a junction north of Tel Aviv where suicide bombers killed 21 Israelis last month)," Mr. Sarid said. "And on this mutual reckoning they will

decide what they can do now to infuse new life into the peace process."

Under the 1993 Israeli-PLO peace deal the army was to have withdrawn from West Bank centres by last July, paving the way for elections to a Palestinian council.

But Mr. Rabin has put the pullout on hold, citing the scores of Israelis killed in attacks by opponents of the peace deal.

The delays, the attacks, and an Israeli entry ban on West Bank and Gaza Palestinians have eroded grass-roots support for both Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin and brought the talks to a deep crisis.

"There's no point in denying the talks have known better, more promising days and now they are really at a low point, but crises are unavoidable, and sometimes solving a crisis can spur the process afterward," Mr. Sarid said.

"Perhaps we will see signs of this tomorrow." The PLO, hoping to break the logjam, reiterated on Tuesday it would under certain conditions accept an Israeli handover of West Bank towns in stages rather than all at once.

They said Palestinians would accept a West Bank

handover in stages, starting with the towns of Jenin and Bethlehem, so long as it was accompanied by an acceptable overall timetable.

PLO officials said Israel so far had said it was ready to experiment, redeploying away from Jenin and Bethlehem, but without agreeing to an overall timetable.

Tayeb Abdul Rahim, general secretary of the PNA, said: "We are prepared to accept gradual redeployment from Jenin and Bethlehem first if the Israelis agree to a timetable for redeployment from other West Bank cities."

Ahmad Qouriea, the authority's economics chief agreed, telling Reuters: "We have no objection for implementation of a comprehensive agreement on redeployment from all West Bank cities but this agreement has to be reached in advance."

"We are afraid, if no comprehensive agreement is reached, that once they withdraw from Jenin and Bethlehem, they might not withdraw from other cities," said Mr. Qouriea.

Mr. Arafat has his own list of demands.

They range from an end to the crippling closure of

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Arabs divided over disarmament treaty

CAIRO (Agencies) — Arab League experts failed to agree on the text of a draft treaty on eliminating weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East after two days of talks here, participants said Wednesday.

Adnan Omran, assistant secretary general of the league, said it was now uncertain whether the treaty would be adopted by foreign ministers from member states who meet in the Egyptian capital on March 22.

"Perhaps they will have to work more on the treaty because it is a very important document and it cannot be finalised in several days or weeks," Mr. Omran told AFP.

The experts' session, which opened Tuesday and wrapped up Wednesday, had to be extended because of disagreements. It was attended by 21 of the league's 22 members, with Somalia absent.

The draft treaty was drawn up by Mahmoud Kareem,

head of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's disarmament department, an Egyptian official said.

One participant who asked not to be named said "the representatives have different views" on the proposed treaty.

"We need to study the different ideas presented and, in my view, we need another meeting of experts," Prince Turki Ben Mohammed Ben Saud of Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry declared.

Mr. Omran, however, ruled out another meeting and said the Arab League secretariat general would draw up the final text to present to member states.

He hoped for a "positive attitude towards this treaty from all states in the region because those which reject it will bear the responsibility."

The draft aims to "make the Middle East a zone free from atomic, biological and chemical weapons."

"The term 'Middle East'

includes all territories under the sovereignty or control of Arab League members as well as Iran and Israel," it stated.

It calls on signatories to ban the production of arms of mass destruction, and to "dismantle and destroy arms of mass destruction they possess and to convert their installations to peaceful uses."

The Arab League hopes its treaty will pressure Israel into signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by addressing fears cited by the Jewish state as a reason for not joining up.

Israel refuses to sign the NPT, which comes up for renewal in April.

The Jewish state has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons, though Western experts say it has around 200 nuclear warheads.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid arrived in Lebanon from Syria on Wednesday for talks on a joint Arab stance

on signing the extension of the NPT, Lebanese officials said.

Before leaving Damascus where he met President Hafez Al Assad, Dr. Abdul Meguid said Arab states would not renew their signature of the NPT if Israel refused to sign.

The Lebanese government, which has no nuclear programme, is facing calls from influential Muslim religious leaders not to sign on Syria also dominates Lebanon politically and militarily and Beirut is expected to toe Syria's line.

The Egyptian government meanwhile banned distribution of the Jerusalem Post in Egypt from Wednesday following an article criticising three senior officials for anti-Israeli views, editor David Bar-Ilan said.

"I am astonished that a country that signed a peace treaty with Israel over 15 years ago would resort to this."

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Full 48-hour ceasefire reached in Chechenya

SLEPTSOVSK (Agencies) — Russian and Chechen officials agreed Wednesday to a 48-hour complete ceasefire in Chechenya. Despite scepticism and widespread violation of an earlier truce.

The new ceasefire was set to take effect at midnight, Chechen field commander Shamil Bassayev said at the conclusion of talks in the town of Sleptsovsk, Ingushetia, just west of Chechenya. Negotiations toward a longer-lasting peace are to resume Friday.

A preliminary agreement had been reached on Monday for the two sides to stop using heavy artillery and to begin working out an exchange of war prisoners and dead.

But that ceasefire has been punctuated by widespread artillery and missile attacks in the area south of the Chechen capital.

"No war in the world ends if talks are held on the level of field commanders," Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev was quoted Wednesday as saying.

In an interview the Balfic news service said was conducted the previous day, Mr. Dudayev expressed doubt the talks would yield results and said Russia was only trying to convey a peacemaker image on the eve of President Boris Yeltsin's address to parliament.

Carrying grenade launchers and yelling "Allahu Akbar" as they pulled up in

six cars and a mini-bus, about 50 fighters from Mr. Dudayev's presidential guard accompanied lead Chechen negotiator Aslan Maskhadov to Wednesday's session.

The Russian delegation arrived quietly in two helicopters and went through a back door for the talks, being held in a pale blue, one-story building at Sleptsovsk airport. The Russians were led by Colonel Anatoly Kulikov, commander of Moscow's troops in Chechenya.

Mr. Maskhadov, wearing gray camouflage and a gray wool cap, and some of the Chechen fighters accompanying expressed optimism about the talks despite suspicions the Russians would not observe a ceasefire.

"If Dudayev tells us to die, we will die," said a fighter named Roman, carrying an anti-tank grenade launcher over his shoulder. "But we think this may be the beginning of the end (of the fighting)."

The Russians and others are dubious that an agreement would be complied with by Chechen volunteer fighters not serving in Mr. Dudayev's army. Even Mr. Maskhadov has warned that he does not control the independent fighters.

"The Chechen side is a lot of small groups who act how they want to," said Zhabrail Bogatyrev, spokesman for

U.S. experts reportedly see Saudi-Yemeni clash

PARIS (Agencies) — Saudi Arabia is massing armour and artillery on its disputed border with Yemen and a new clash appears likely, U.S. defence experts quoted in a strategic newsletter said Wednesday.

The report in the TTU weekly was published as Yemen said its negotiations with Saudi Arabia were in trouble despite 24 days of talks in Riyadh.

U.S. defence experts "note from satellite pictures the presence of five brigades — two armoured, two mechanised infantry and one artillery — which are being strengthened daily," TTU said.

The U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency "regards an armed clash between Saudi Arabia and Yemen as probable in the short-term," it said.

After 24 days of negotiations the gap between the two sides remained deep Wednesday.

Yemeni chief negotiator Sheikh Abdullah Al Ahmar said "points of disagreement between Riyadh and Sanaa are numerous and large."

Officially the Saudis have only signalled their intention to try to settle the issue of the border between northern Yemen and the provinces of Najran, Jizan and Asir, assigned to Saudi Arabia by the 1934 Taif accord.

Sanaa says the treaty expired in 1992 and has refused to

renew it, but is using it as a basis for the negotiations.

Sanaa also wants a complete normalisation of ties with Riyadh and agreement on the whole border stretching from the Red Sea in the west to Oman in the east along with maritime boundaries.

The border dispute has flared up into armed clashes, the latest on Jan. 10 in which more than 50 people were killed, according to diplomats.

Yemen accused Saudi Arabia of massing troops on the border last month after the Riyadh talks had begun.

Sheikh Ahmar was quoted as saying Wednesday that if no breakthrough is achieved in two days, the talks will be put off until after the Ramadan feast early next month.

Sheikh Ahmar, however, appeared more optimistic than his president about the talks under way in Riyadh since Jan. 22.

"The talks are proceeding well and in a positive atmosphere, with a good brotherly spirit," he told the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat.

"Good progress has been achieved... agreement has been reached on several important points," he said.

"Perhaps by postponing the negotiations till next month, we may give our two countries the chance to review the (remaining) points

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U.N. to complete Somalia withdrawal by March 6

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The withdrawal of the U.N. peacekeeping force from Somalia should be completed by March 6, well ahead of the March 31 deadline set by the Security Council, the top U.N. peacekeeping official said Tuesday.

"I am pleased to inform you that this highly complex operation is proceeding without a hitch," Under-Secretary-General Kofi Annan told a news conference.

He said about 8,000 U.N. troops were still in Somalia, compared with 15,000 last November when the Security Council took the decision to pull out.

On Feb. 24 the U.N. commander, Lieutenant-General Abou Samah of Malaysia, will hand over operational control to Lieutenant-General Anthony Zinni of the United States, whose combined task force will help extricate the U.N. rearguard of some 2,500 Pakistani and Bangladeshi soldiers.

Mr. Annan said the task force would have 17 ships, from France, Italy, Malaysia, Pakistan and the United States, off Mogadishu to assist with the withdrawal.

The U.N. Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was first mounted on a small scale in 1992 to help rescue Somalis from famine and chaos in which hundreds of thousands died.

Because of continuing factional fighting, it was superseded in December 1992 by a U.S.-led force which built to a strength of about 37,000 before handing over in May 1993 to a new U.N. force which grew to 29,000.

UNOSOM has suffered more than 130 casualties and cost close to \$1 billion a year.

Mr. Annan, just back from a visit to Somalia, said although UNOSOM did not attain all its objectives it had saved many lives, ended a famine which devastated the country and helped restore normal life in many regions.

But he said these achievements were vulnerable to renewed factional fighting.

"It is hoped that the withdrawal of UNOSOM will serve as a big wake-up call for the leaders and that they will finally have the courage to compromise and seize this opportunity to bring peace and stability to their country," he said.

A major lesson learned by the United Nations in Somalia was "to withdraw — and I do not mean retreat" — and demonstrate that "there is a limit to the patience and resources of the international community."

He contrasted this with long-running peacekeeping operations in such places as Cyprus, Southern Lebanon and Kashmir, where the United Nations had often been accused of freezing an unresolved situation.

Asked what would happen if the Somali factions resumed fighting, he said: "I doubt very much that the international community or the Security Council will rush to send in another force."

U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali says that the withdrawal of the peacekeepers remaining in Somalia is a "new situation in the history of the United Nations."

Until Somalia, the United Nations had not left a theatre of operations until its mission had been accomplished.

This is clearly not the case with Somalia.



IN MEMORY: Sari Jabari, eight, joins his chest while praying with his father when grandfather in prayer over the grave of his Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire father Salman in a Hebron cemetery as Palestinian killed more than 30 worshippers Feb. 25 commemorates the first anniversary of (AFP photo) the Hebron massacre. Sari was injured in the

Yemeni leader urges crackdown

SANAA (R) — Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Tuesday told security officials to step up their fight against organized crime and ordered special courts to be set up to deal with such cases quickly.

Mr. Saleh, in a meeting also attended by judicial officials, spoke after reports on Tuesday, that one policeman was killed and four wounded in a shootout with a gang of thieves.

"We will not tolerate any more any security official breaching his duties or failing to carry them out," the official SABA news agency quoted Mr. Saleh as saying.

"Those unable to carry out their assigned duties should make room for others who are more capable," he said.

He urged police to double efforts to "bring criminals before court... and to strike with an iron fist against them."

Mr. Saleh ordered the creation of special "quick courts" within the coming few days to deal with all cases related to crimes.

Diplomats said on Tuesday that four people wearing police uniforms broke into the home of a French embassy employee on Sunday, chained him and his family and drove away with valuables. Nobody was injured in the incident.

Yemen's Interior Ministry said in a statement in Al Thawra newspaper on Tuesday that one policeman was killed and four wounded in a shootout with a gang of thieves who had taken a man hostage.

The 20-member gang, which was arrested, had kidnapped Ahmad Abdul Rahman Al Moqtari from his office in Sanaa on Sunday and taken him to an area outside the capital where they beat and stabbed him before releasing him in Sanaa.

Official said Mr. Moqtari owned a photo store.

It said police found the gang's hideout on Monday. One policeman was fatally shot and four were wounded in an exchange of gunfire between the gang and police.

On source said the attackers on the French guard's house were not policemen and were believed to be members of the same gang whose members kidnapped Mr. Moqtari.

On Saturday a leading member of the main opposition party Yemen Socialist Party was shot dead in the capital.

Beirut seeks U.S. arms for security

BEIRUT (R) — President Elias Hrawi, stating Beirut's terms for peace with Israel, said on Tuesday he was seeking U.S. weapons to control security in South Lebanon after Israeli troops withdrawal.

"At present there are negotiations with the Americans to get weapons at a cheap price and soon we may get 16 advanced helicopters," Mr. Hrawi told members of an editors' syndicate.

"We are not arming our army to fight anyone... we don't want to get tanks. All we strive for is to get military supplies for the army to control the security situation on Lebanese land especially in the south when Israeli withdraws," Mr. Hrawi said.

Mr. Hrawi said Beirut's condition for peace with Israel was a complete Israeli troop withdrawal from South Lebanon.

"We are ready to send 25,000 troops to the south to control security and when Israel withdraws to the international border we pledge not one bullet will be fired from our land," he said.

Israel occupies a narrow border zone in South Lebanon, comprising 10 per cent of Lebanon territory, where it keeps 1,000 Israeli troops and a 3,000-man Israeli-backed militia.

Israel insists that before it withdraws from South Lebanon, Beirut must rein in the pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) and stop the militant group from mounting raids on Israeli forces in South Lebanon and guarantee border security for six months.

But Lebanon says resistance is legal while Israel remains.

Mr. Hrawi accused Israel of not being serious about the three-year-old peace process.

Both Lebanese and Syrian talks with Israel are logjammed over the question of a full Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon.

Speaking two days after a meeting in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad at which they agreed to counter "pressures" linked to the peace process, Mr. Hrawi said Lebanon and Syria would continue their hand-in-hand policy at the peace talks.

Iran's ties with West poisoned from Rushdie 'fatwa'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Britain's condemnation of Iran on the anniversary of the "fatwa" against Salman Rushdie shows that relations between Tehran and the West are still poisoned six years after the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini condemned the British writer to death.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said on the sixth anniversary Tuesday: "We cannot be expected to have a normal relationship with Iran as long as there is a religious edict or 'fatwa' against Mr. Rushdie."

Mr. Hurd added that "activities of the Iranian government, such as rewards for those who injure him... are not acceptable."

Norway joined the attack. "The fatwa violates international laws and all human rights principles," Foreign Minister Bjorn Tore Godal said on Tuesday.

The 15-member European Union (EU) marked the anniversary by calling on Tehran to lift the "fatwa" against Mr. Rushdie, which has provoked tension between Iran and several European countries in the past weeks.

On Feb. 14, 1989, the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a "fatwa" against the Indian-born author to punish him for his book "The Satanic Verses," considered blasphemous by many Muslims.

Iranian officials have repeatedly upheld the sentence, with Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying two years ago that Mr. Rushdie "should be and would be executed."

Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Vaezi said during a visit to Denmark last week that "the fatwa is based on Islamic principles, has received the approval of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference member states and is therefore irrevocable."

Iranian intransigence towards Mr. Rushdie is largely responsible for a decision by the EU in December 1992 to limit political relations with Iran to a "critical dialogue," which rules out any exchange of visits at high levels among other measures.

"Decided in defiance of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the principle of the sovereignty of states, in particular regarding the protection by the latter of their nationals, this sentence is null and void," the EU said in a statement Monday.

The "fatwa" meanwhile continues to create tension between Iran and several European countries on a bilateral level.

Since the beginning of the year, it has provoked a scaling down in relations between Iran and Norway, with the two countries recalling their ambassadors, and the cancellation of a visit to Sweden by Mr. Vaezi last week.

It also created tension during a trip to Denmark by the deputy foreign minister last week.

Mr. Vaezi's visit was boycotted by Danish parliamentarian Niels Helveg Petersen, who hosted the Iranian official's visit, warned later that Copenhagen could take a tougher line towards Iran if Tehran does not call off the death sentence.

Iran has been hugely irritated by such pressure and considers them a sign of a Western plot — notably from Britain and the United States — to undermine the Islamic republic.

Tehran has also reacted strongly to meetings between Mr. Rushdie and Western officials, which took place frequently after the author went on the offensive a year ago to force Iran to revoke the sentence.

Iranian leaders still contend the "fatwa" is a religious matter and should not interfere in relations between Iran and other states.

Mr. Vaezi said last week the government did not intend to actively contribute to carrying out the sentence.

But such arguments are regarded with scepticism by European diplomats in Tehran, who say Iran is led by the clergy and that there is no separation between state and religion here.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel announces creation of super-computer

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Hebrew University in Jerusalem said Tuesday it had created a super-computer capable of meeting all Israel's scientific needs. "This computer, capable of carrying out four million operations per second, can be improved further and outstrip the performance of computers produced in the United States," a university spokesman said. He added that Israel was now one of the few countries to have the computer technology necessary for top-level research, notably in the fields of physics, biology, chemistry and mathematics. The administration of former U.S. President George Bush opposed the sale to Israel of two American super-computers, fearing they would be used as part of a programme to simulate nuclear tests or to develop a neutron bomb. Israel press reports say President Bill Clinton is less reluctant to secure such a deal and that negotiations are underway.

Barber jailed for circumcising girl in street

CAIRO (AFP) — A barber and his wife were jailed for two years for circumcising a 14-year-old girl in the street in front of passers-by, the official daily Al Akhbar reported Wednesday. The girl, who was "screaming hysterically with terror," was held down by the wife while the barber carried out the operation in "an open and filthy tent with dirty instruments," a Cairo court said. The circumcision, the removal of part or all of the clitoris, took place in December during a religious celebration which gathered thousands of people. The court said the couple had "violated the human feelings of the young girl and seriously damaged her dignity." Egyptian law allows female circumcision as long as it is carried out by doctors in hospital. However, in most cases the operation is carried out by unqualified people and barbers in dangerous conditions. Close to 3,600 young girls are circumcised every day in Egypt, according to the Egyptian Human Rights Organisation.

Saudi Arabia awards King Faisal prizes

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's King Faisal prizes for 1995 were awarded to three Egyptians, two Americans, a Briton, a Canadian and a Syrian on Tuesday for services to Islam or scientific research. Prince Khalid Al Faisal, head of the King Faisal International Prize Foundation, said the award given to each of the winners had been increased from \$50,000 to \$200,000 this year. Sheikh Gad Al Haq Al Gad Al Haq, the Egyptian highest Sunni Muslim authority, received the prize for "service to Islam," the selection committee announced Tuesday. American K. Barry Sharpless, a chemist, received the prize for science. Fellow countryman Mark Davis, Briton Gregory Winter and Canadian Tak Wah Mak were jointly awarded the prize for medicine. Egyptians Hamdi Sayed Al Sakunt and Mohammad Abu Al Anwar Ali, together with Syrian Salma Lutfi Al Hafar, were recognised for their studies on Arabic literature. The foundation was created in 1976, a year after Faisal Ben Abdul Aziz was assassinated. It has since given awards to more than 100 researchers from 40 countries.

Kuwait MPs want to curb deportation power

KUWAIT (R) — Five Kuwaiti members of parliament (MPs) have submitted a bill to curb the government's power to deport and take other unilateral decisions, an MP said on Wednesday. The bill would allow courts to overturn on appeal so-called administrative orders by government ministers in matters concerning residence, nationality, newspaper licensing and building places of religious worship. "MP Ali Al-Baghlil said: 'This would be an important change.' Mr. Baghlil, spokesman of the assembly's human rights committee, told Reuters. Mr. Baghlil said in answer to a question that the deportation of Palestinian Tawfiq Amarnah last month was an example of the kind of incident that prompted the MPs to propose their bill, though he noted the bill's scope was wider than deportations. Mr. Amarnah was deported to Jordan by administrative order after writing a poem that criticised a Kuwaiti journalist for using his daily column to make political attacks on Palestinians.

Fall of Hekmatyar's base is Taliban's greatest victory to date

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The fall of former Afghan Premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's headquarters to the Taliban militants marked the movement's greatest victory as its power continues to grow, analysts here said.

The capture of Charasayah, just 25 kilometres south of the Afghan capital, represented a major setback for Mr. Hekmatyar, and helped tighten the Taliban's grip on Kabul, they added.

Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezbe-Islami faction has now lost three positions in quick succession to the militant student-led movement, with the Taliban — also wrestling control of Wardak and Logar provinces from the last few days — as they mass their forces south of Kabul, the Taliban are negotiating with embattled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's troops, who are based in Sangi Nawishta just 20 kilometres away, Afghan sources said.

The militants, who have gathered considerable strength since appearing from nowhere about six months ago, are demanding entry to the city and saying they will disarm all factions in the war-torn capital.

Mr. Rabbani, backed by his military strongman Ahmad Shah Massoud, holds most of Kabul, and has thwarted Mr. Hekmatyar's repeated onslaughts on the city which have claimed more than 20,000 lives over the past two years.

But now the president, facing a serious threat from the Taliban, has urged United Nations special envoy to Afghanistan, Mahmood Mestiri, to speed up peace efforts which have been dragging on with limited success for many months.

Diplomats have said that commanders of both Rabbani and Mr. Hekmatyar's troops, have been defecting to the Taliban, and a similar trend is thought to have hit pro-Saudi factional leader Rasool Sayyaf's Ittehad-e-Islami Party, which is allied with Mr. Rabbani.

If confirmed, the desertions would further undermine the power bases of the rival leaders, who have been at loggerheads since the collapse of the once Soviet-backed Communist regime in April 1992, analysts here said.

In response to the rapidly changing balance of power and military situation, the U.N. envoy Tuesday advanced the date for initiating the process for transfer of power to a pan-Afghan authority in Kabul to Feb. 18, instead of Feb. 20 as he had announced last week.

"The new development in Afghanistan demonstrates the desire of the Afghan people for peace and the disillusionment with the present disastrous situation in the country," Mr. Mestiri said in a statement Tuesday, inviting all parties in the conflict to witness a ceremony marking the start of the process in Kabul.

Mr. Hekmatyar's party has apparently responded positively to Mr. Mestiri's appeal to all warring sides to cease hostilities, to open all roads and to restore a power supply to Kabul.

"We are ready for cessation of hostilities," Hekmatyar spokesman Mangal Husain told AFP here, adding that the truce would come into effect provided Mr. Rabbani's response to the call was also "positive."

However, analysts here feared that the possible disintegration of the two major parties — the Hezbe-Islami and Mr. Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami — could blow apart the entire U.N. peace process, which was set up around the main Afghan factions.

The Taliban surfaced last autumn when they successfully rescued a Pakistan-sponsored trade convoy bound for Central Asia after it was hijacked by rebels in the southern city of Kandahar.

The mainly bearded Islamic school students, who also sport turbans, later captured Kandahar, an ancient royal capital southwest of Kabul. Since then they have scored a series of spectacular military gains.

Since emerging as a group of a few hundred religious students, their number has now swelled to 25,000 men, equipped with some 200 tanks, heavy artillery, missiles and a dozen fighter aircraft, diplomatic sources said.

But Afghan sources have said their main weapon lies in the support they have garnered from the people in areas under their influence.

Diplomats and Afghan experts have said the Taliban are militarily backed by Pakistan, although Islamabad denies the claim.

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Dipoldo
17:30 Jafna
19:00 News in French
19:30 N & A
19:45 Piano En Equation
20:30 Road to Avonlea
21:10 The Hat Squad
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "Taking Care of Business"
23:10 Bangkok Hilton

PRAYER TIMES
04:56 Fajr
06:14 (Sunrise) Doha
14:57 Dhuhr
17:26 'Asr
17:26 Maghrib
16:43 'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swidieh, Tel. 811740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634591
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrance Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 63851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 77261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Fianco En Equation Church Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624326
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 644195
The Letter-By-Santa Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675901
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures will rise slightly with winds becoming northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman 5 / 15
Aqaba 13 / 21
Deserts 4 / 16

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 611111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 643022
Traffic Police 696530
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 635870
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 892467
Complaints 767111
Amman Municipality 626730
First pharmacy 649495
Fendous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 636755
Naiourkh pharmacy 636730
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 636730
Simelcin pharmacy 637661
Najih pharmacy 847632

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Fakhr Tayeh 855880
Dr. Ghazi Abu Shikha 752405
Dr. Nidal Dahleh 627195
Dr. Bassam Karadineh 759101
First pharmacy 649495
Fendous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 636755
Naiourkh pharmacy 636730
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 636730
Simelcin pharmacy 637661
Najih pharmacy 847632

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 8131332
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 6428106
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 6424412
Jahat Amman Maternity 642360
Palcusine, Shmechani 661714
Shmechani Hospital 669131
Uzversity Hospital 648445
Al-Musabir Hospital 6672779
The Islamic, Abdoli 6662737
Al-Ahli, Abdoli 6616168
Istilah, Al-Mutajreen 7771013
Al-Badri, J. Ashrafich 77511625
Army, Marka 8916115
Queen Alia Hospital 6224050
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 017983323
Zarqa National Hospital 019949590
Ibn Sina Hospital 019986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 019909090

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
05:00 Aden (RJ)
05:30 Aden (RJ)
07:20 Sanaa (RJ)
09:15 Sanaa (RJ)
09:15 Riyadh (RJ)
12:00 New Delhi (RJ)
12:00 Lahore, Aden (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
19:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:25 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:10 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
10:00 Muscat, Doha (GFI)
12:00 Riyadh (SV)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
16:15 Dubai (EK)
17:00 Doha (OF)
17:50 Paris, Damascus (AF)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
09:45 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
10:45 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:00 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:40 Rome (RJ)
11:55 Paris (RJ)
12:00 London (RJ)
12:00 Lahore, Aden (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
19:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:25 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:10 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
08:15 Beirut (ME)
10:55 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GFI)
13:30 Algiers (AH)
13:50 Sharjah (AH)
17:15 Dubai (EK)
22:40 Cairo (Q7)
21:50 Cairo (MS)
02:20 Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fil per kg
Apple 700 / 400
Banana 600 / 300
Banana (Mukammal) 600 / 300
Cabbage 140 / 80
Carrot 220 / 120
Cauliflower 200 / 120
Cucumbers (large) 200 / 120
Cucumbers (small) 400 / 300
Eggplant 250 / 180
Garlic 100 / 60
Grape Fruit 280 / 170
Lemon 200 / 120
Marrow (large) 320 / 200
Marrow (small) 320 / 200
Onion (dry) 200 / 120
Orange 200 / 120
Pepper (red) 1100 / 700
Pepper (sweet) 480 / 300
Potato 350 / 220
Radish 180 / 120
Spinach 120 / 80
String Beans 600 / 400
Tomato 300 / 200
Turnip 180 / 120

WHAT'S GOING

FILM
entitled "Native Son" at the American
day 2:30 p.m.

PLAYS
in Arabic) entitled "The Chap of Sanaa"
Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
in Arabic) entitled "Ye Who Are Hear"
Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 9:00 p.m.

OLD RECITAL
entitled by Jalal Al Wandi at the Phoenix
and Ari on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

CONCERT
by the Iraqi Danah band at the Royal
Centre on Thursday at 9:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS
of paintings under glass entitled
"America" exhibit at the Royal Cultural
Centre of all ages) at the American
Complex Gallery.
entitled by Qasim Al Samir at the
entitled at the Royal Cultural Centre
of the works of Lebanese artist
entitled Arab artists. Also showing
Cultural Centre.

Imams attend seminar on water conservation

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — More than 250 imams from mosques in and around Amman Wednesday attended a seminar at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation on the "Role of Imams in Water Conservation Campaigns."

Sadiq Musa from the Ministry of al Awqaf in his lecture on the "Conservation of Water in Islam" stressed the importance of raising awareness among Jordanians of the religious obligation to conserve "God-given resources," including water, already mentioned in the Holy Quran.

Munir Adgham of the Jordan Environment Society (JES), said he was hoping that the lecture given by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Dr. Mohammad Hani, on water resources in Jordan would demonstrate to the audience as a result of excessive and wasteful human consumption, the goods God had provided were getting scarcer by the day.

"God provided, but we misused," Mr. Adgham summarised succinctly. He emphasised the valuable contribution members of the religious establishment could make to the water conservation campaign.

Since they reach out to a large audience, Mr. Adgham said he hoped that the use of water conservation would be the topic of many daily sermons in mosques the following weeks.

The seminar is one of a series of workshops and studies on water conservation and conservation and an open day at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

JBA statement said that JBA chairman, Hamdi al-Sayid, will lead the Jordanian side to the discussions with the Australian team. He is expected to include representatives of major Australian firms dealing with the setting of meat and livestock processing, engineering, services, banking, agricultural refrigeration services, products, foodstuffs, electric power, dams designs, and resources, construction.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins of the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FILM

Film entitled "Native Son" at the American Center on Thursday 2:30 p.m.

PLAYS

Play (in Arabic) entitled "The Chap of Sansarqand" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
Play (in Arabic) entitled "Ye Who Are Hearing" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 9:00 p.m.

OUZ RECITAL

Joint recital by Jalal Al Wandi at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

CONCERT

Concert by the Iraqi Danab band at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 9:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

photo exhibition at the Friends of Archaeology Center, exhibition of paintings under glass entitled "Oriental Jots" by Fatima Rabou at the Royal Cultural Centre. Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring mericans of all ages) at the American Center.

hibition of works by Qasim Al Samir at the Housing Complex Gallery.

ok exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre.

hibition of the works of Lebanese artist Amin Al Shiba at Darat Al Funun. Also showing works by contemporary Arab artists.

ncational works depicting the life of "Voltaire" at the ench Cultural Centre.

House report tackles Audit Bureau's performance, parliamentarians' right to visit prison inmates

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament Wednesday reaffirmed the right of Parliament members to visit prisons and examine the conditions of inmates, and decided to send a parliamentary committee to the Swaga prison for this purpose.

The House's stand was announced by its Speaker Saad Hayel Sourr who read out a report by a special committee formed to examine a complaint by Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies that they were barred from visiting prisoners.

The seven-member committee led by Mr. Sourr said in the report that they had held a meeting with Interior Minister Salamah Hamad and IAF deputies Hamzeh Mansour, Bassam Emoush and Abdul Rahim Ekour and

heard their views concerning the complaint.

The report said that Parliament members have all the right to visit prisons and reformatories centres with the purpose of examining the conditions of detainees and inmates.

It said that the visits can be made after consultations with the interior minister who ought to make arrangements for them.

Referring to the IAF complaint, the report said that the IAF Parliament members had requested the minister for permission to visit and secured his approval; he had instructed the Swaga prison officials to welcome the deputies but regrettably, the Parliament members were barred by prison officials from seeing the inmates during their two visits to the prison.

The report also voiced the IAF members' protest

against the interior minister's statement in the House, in which he said that certain deputies were trying to secure political gains from this issue and that they were offending the country's security services.

The report also voiced protest against the Jordan Radio and Television for broadcasting the minister's statement in full without cancelling those parts which were considered offending to the deputies' feelings and which had been cancelled from the House's official records upon the speaker's instructions.

The report reaffirmed the need for ensuring complete confidence between the executive and legislative authorities and announced that the committee was organising a visit to Swaga prison in the company of IAF members and other deputies.

The House later started discussing a report by its Finance Committee, which included detailed reports by the Audit Bureau for 1992 and 1993.

The report stressed that the committee has discovered general weakness in the administration and performance of government departments and incompetence on the part of the employees.

The report referred to the Finance Ministry's practice of giving loans to firms operating at a loss, noting that until the end of last year such loans amounted to JD120 million, and called for a better system for collecting dues to the state treasury.

The report referred to the losses of Royal Jordanian (RJ), which until the end of 1993 amounted to JD143.9 million, and called for prompt action to enable RJ to collect JD64.4 million due to the airline.

The report also pointed out that contractors carrying out

government projects were slow in finishing them and recommended that thorough feasibility studies be made before the start of any project.

The report pointed to practices of embezzlements and frauds of public funds, as included in the Audit Bureau's reports, and recommended that the government take steps to safeguard public funds.

The report referred to violations of government regulations concerning the appointment of government employees and recommended that the inspection and control bureau be given wider authorities to control the appointments procedures.

The report recommended that the Central Bank of Jordan should come under the jurisdiction of the Audit Bureau since it is a public organisation.

Deputies Ahmad Qudah, Ahmad Kofahi, Abdul Razak Tubeishat and Bassam Emoush demanded that the Audit Bureau be given wider authority to control public spending and urged the House to speed up work on a draft law to hold accountable persons amassing fortunes through illegitimate means and to deal with economic crimes.

In reply to deputies' remarks, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker suggested that a special workshop be organised where specialists can scrutinise the Audit Bureau's reports and draw up a practical mechanism for dealing with the violations.

The prime minister stressed that the government was determined to deal with all corruption cases, saying that any person proven to have abused his authorities or got involved in corruption cases will be referred to trial.

Journalists feel Arab culture aspect neglected in draft for social summit

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prominent Arab journalists expressed their disappointment when, at a U.N. meeting Wednesday, they were asked to offer suggestions for a draft Arab declaration that had already been drawn.

Fifteen journalists representing leading Arabic newspapers met at Forte Grand Hotel upon an invitation from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to discuss the Arab draft proposal and plan of action that will be presented to the World Summit on Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in March.

They said the meeting came a bit late. Salah Eddin Hafez, from the leading Egyptian Al-Ahram newspaper, said "the general framework of the declaration had already been drawn and if there were going to be any changes or modifications to the document they would only be marginal."

"And even if there are going to be modifications... the Western countries do not meet their commitments, especially concerning development aid programmes in developing countries," Mr. Hafez said. Saleh Al Qallab, a columnist at the Jordanian daily Al-Dustour, vehemently criticised the meeting and said it was useless.

"I do not believe in these

conferences, they are only some sort of ornament the U.N. uses to promote itself," Mr. Al Qallab said. "Anyone can write the declaration itself in an hour's time."

George Qusseifi, ESCWA's representative at the conference, said the draft declaration has not been endorsed yet as the Arab ministers of social development presented the document to the Arab countries without ratifying it.

But journalists said the document does not give appropriate attention to cultural specifics. Mr. Hafez said the spirit of the declaration was foreign to the majority of the member countries to the meeting.

"It imposes the same old (Western) model to solve problems in developing countries, overlooking cultural differences," Mr. Hafez said.

Fahmi Huseini, a prominent Egyptian writer, said there was a noticeable absence of Arab culture and civilisation dimensions from the draft declaration. According to the Islamist writer, the successful solution to the social problems in the Arab World would be to relay the responsibilities of social development to Al Waqf Department.

"Mosques are only used now for praying while historically they had an educational role as well as a social one," the writer said.

If mosques are not used and activated, such declarations "will be confined to the elite circles without benefitting the poor," he added.

Khalil Al Banna, from the Ministry of Social Development, defended the declaration and called on participants not to reject everything that comes from the West.

"We should not be closing the doors in front of universal thinking. There are some points that might be in contradiction with our beliefs... but the draft declaration is excellent," Mr. Al Banna said.

Earlier during the meeting, the United Nations resident representative in Amman, Osman Hashem, said the purpose of the two-day seminar was to engage journalists in the preparations for the social summit.

"He said the objective of such a meeting was to focus light on important issues that are the cornerstone for global development."

Dr. Hashem said the U.N. hopes such a meeting would enhance the Arab countries' role at the summit.

ESCWA's Secretary General Hazem Bihawi said the media had an important role in increasing people's awareness regarding social problems. He urged media organisations to provide more space and time to discussing social issues.

Jordan to start pipeline project to bring in 20 mcm of water annually

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan plans to start building a 3.5-kilometre pipeline to bring 20 million cubic metres of water annually from the border with Israel to the northern areas of the Kingdom in two weeks, a senior Jordanian negotiator said Wednesday.

The pipeline, which will cost JD 3.5 million, will be ready by end of May/early June so that Jordan would start getting the water during the summer, said Munther Haddadin, the Kingdom's senior-most negotiator in water-related issues with Israel.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation will be in charge of the project.

The 20 million cubic metres of Lake Tiberias water "Jordan" would get through the pipeline are part of the additional 215 million cubic metres per year that the Kingdom is entitled to under the Oct. 26 peace treaty it signed with Israel.

The pipeline will be the first new water project to be built under the peace treaty.

The actual receipt by the Kingdom of its full share of water as acknowledged and accepted by Israel in the peace treaty depends on the completion of dams, diversion structures and a desalination plant. This could take up to two years. In the meantime, Israel is expected to accept interim

arrangements for Jordan to receive part of the quantity agreed upon in the peace treaty.

In addition to the pipeline, Jordan will also receive eight million cubic metres of water between May 15 and Oct. 15 from the Yarmouk River after Israel reduces its diversion of water from the river to 12 million cubic metres per year from the present 20 to 22 million cubic metres, Dr. Haddadin told the Jordan Times.

During the summer, Israel will also divert 10 million cubic metres of drinking water from the Jordan Valley, and this water will be pumped to Irbid and Amman, Dr. Haddadin said.

"In meetings with their Israeli counterparts at Beit Shean this week, Jordanian negotiators headed by Dr. Haddadin reached agreement on launching feasibility studies for a dam to be constructed on the Yarmouk River in the Al Addasiyeh area."

Under the accord, the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) was designated as the project manager and coordinator.

Israel had wanted the project to be "jointly" managed and "we made it clear that there cannot be two bodies as heads of the project," Dr. Haddadin said. The diversion structure

of the project is estimated to cost around JD 10 million, he said.

During the meeting, it was also agreed that Jordan would take charge of projects to store water on the River Jordan and adjacent valleys.

Article II of the annex on water of the peace treaty says that Jordan and Israel "shall cooperate to build a diversion/storage dam on the Yarmouk River directly downstream of the Addasiyeh diversion."

"The purpose is to improve the diversion efficiency into the King Abdullah Canal of the water allocation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and possibly the diversion of Israel's allocation of the river water."

The two sides also agreed to build another water storage facility on the Jordan River, along the border, between the confluence of the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers and the confluence of the River Jordan with Wadi Yabis.

The two water facilities, designated as joint projects, are estimated at \$100 million and the diversion of water from the facilities to each other's territory will be at the cost of the respective sides.

Feasibility studies on the projects will be conducted under financing extended by the European Union (EU) and, subject to the results of the studies, the EU will also finance the construction of the projects.

Charities encouraged to work in rural areas

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Social Development has adopted a policy of encouraging the creation of charitable and voluntary organisations in the rural regions, and societies specialising in dealing with specific sectors, according to ministry Secretary-General Suleiman Rousan Wednesday.

Out of a total of 733 societies registered with the ministry, only 318 are operating in the rural and badia regions of Jordan, noted Mr. Rousan.

He said that the specialised societies account for 10 per cent of the total number of societies, while the rest are multi-purpose societies, adding that from the total number 102 are women societies.

The ministry has allocated JD 260,000 to help finance voluntary and charitable societies' services and programmes this year, said Mr. Rousan, adding that the ministry is in the process of entrusting the National Aid Fund (NAF) with the task of providing assistance to the poor, the orphans and the handicapped, thus relieving the charitable societies of this burden and allowing them to specialise in their work and serve specific purposes.

Referring to help coming from other sources to the charitable societies, Mr. Rousan said that non-governmental organisations like Care, the Middle East Foundation and the Employment and Development Fund are currently financing 42 income-generating projects.

Ministry official tackles tawjihi, school premises, literacy rate

DEIR ABI SAEED (Petra) — Starting with the 1997 scholastic year, only students who want to pursue higher education will have to sit for the tawjihi examination, according to Ministry of Education Secretary General Munther Al Masri.

Addressing a meeting held here to discuss the tawjihi examinations at the end of the secondary school level, Dr. Masri said that students who complete their secondary term will continue to be issued school certificates needed for their work purposes in accordance with specific conditions.

Referring to the tawjihi examination system, Dr. Masri said that the ministry, which organises the tawjihi examination for government and private schools, has not yet taken a final decision on whether the examinations will continue to be taken twice a year, in January and May, or only once, at the end of the school term in the summer.

In the course of determining whether to retain the present system or shift to a once-a-year exam for tawjihi students, the ministry recently conducted a survey on families who have children in the top secondary class and found out that 50 per cent preferred to retain the present system and 50 per cent opted for the once-a-year tawjihi examination. Several speakers presented their views at the meeting, some of whom stressing that

the tawjihi examination should not be taken as a criterion for admitting students at universities.

Dr. Masri referred to the Ministry of Education's drive to improve the present educational system, noting that the ministry is determined to dispose of rented school buildings.

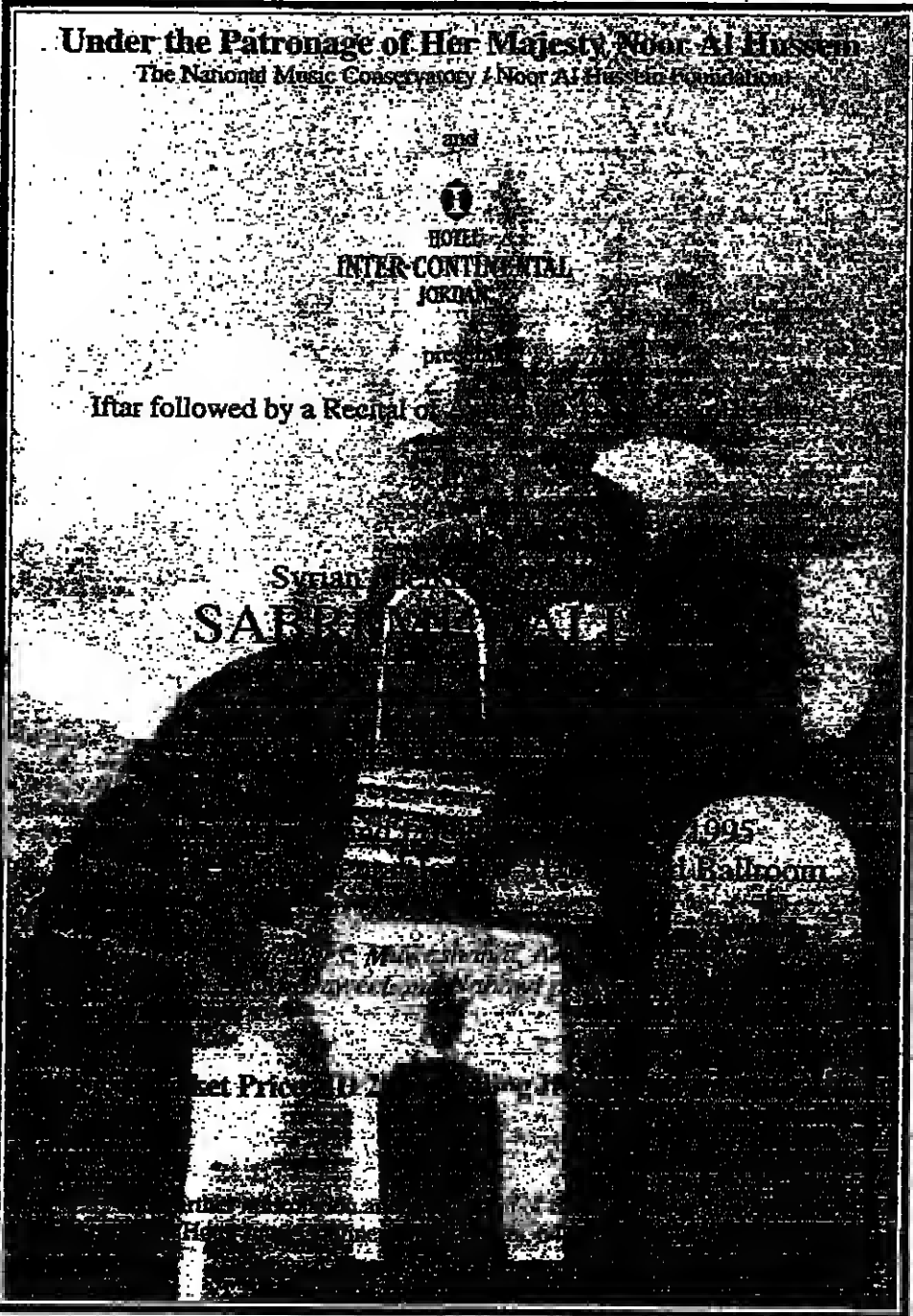
Over the past five years, he said, the ministry has succeeded in reducing from 50 per cent to 12 per cent its dependence on rented buildings.

He also said that the ministry was going ahead with a programme to upgrade teachers' qualifications, noting that it still has to upgrade the level of some 20,000 teachers.

Referring to adult education, he said that by the year 2000 the ministry hopes to have reduced illiteracy from 24 per cent to eight per cent through adult education and literacy classes.

Referring to housing for teachers, he said that the ministry's special housing fund has received a JD 20 million interest-free loan from the government to be re-lent to teachers wishing to build their own houses.

Furthermore, the ministry has secured a JD 180 million World Bank loan to help finance the current stage in the educational development plan, according to Dr. Masri. Present at the meeting were teachers, school directors and ministry officials in the Jordan Valley.



N. Ireland Protestants assail Anglo-Irish plan

BELFAST (Agencies) — Protestant members of parliament from Northern Ireland's biggest party attacked the British government Wednesday for reporting a breakthrough in drafting the next steps of an Anglo-Irish peace plan for the province.

"I think there is a very serious danger that the government has made a massive misjudgement of the situation despite the numerous warnings and advice they have been given over the months," David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) said.

Mr. Trimble, whose party wants Northern Ireland to stay British, said he feared that a plan reviewed by the two governments Tuesday could set up cross-border bodies that would be tantamount to a reunification of Ireland.

But he stopped short of threatening to bring down British Prime Minister John Major's embattled minority government, a threat the UUP has made in the past two weeks as work on the Anglo-Irish plan has gathered pace.

"We are quite prepared to cooperate. We are even prepared in the right circumstances to look at cross-border bodies, but we are not prepared to enter into united Ireland political institutions," Mr. Trimble told BBC radio.

He was reacting to a joint statement by Britain and Ireland Tuesday after ministers reported a breakthrough in drafting a so-called framework document laying down proposed guidelines for constitutional change for their Northern Ireland peace plan.

A bitter Trimble complained that the UUP, the largest party in the province, had asked to be consulted about the drawing up of the document and said that his group would boycott all-party talks which are due to be held on the basis of the plan.

"There is absolutely no point going to discuss a menu, all of the items of which are unpalatable. You are sending people the wrong signals."

A Unionist boycott of all-party talks Britain and Ireland are hoping to convene would be a body blow for the peace process the two governments started with their December 1993 Downing Street Declaration.

The talks are supposed to bring together Irish nationalists, who want the province reunited with Ireland, and Unionists to work out a new "agreed Ireland" and end 25 years of political and sectarian conflict.

British Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Ireland's foreign minister, Dick Spring, said they had made "encouraging progress" and held out the prospect of a landmark Anglo-Irish summit to unveil the plan "shortly."

Publication of their so-called framework document will end months of speculation during which Unionist politicians have threatened to bring down the British government.

Mr. Spring, declaring that there was now "light at the end of the tunnel," appealed to both Protestants and Catholics not to prejudice the document until it is published, which Sir Patrick said could be as early as next week.

It is expected to propose changes to rival British and Irish claims to Northern Ireland as well as the establishment of cross-border bodies.

Mexico's Chiapas governor resigns

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, Mexico (AP) — The governor of Chiapas, beset by rebel calls for his resignation, ended two months in office Tuesday by stepping down, asking Zapatista insurgents to end their fighting.

Gov. Eduardo Robledo Rincon also called for Roman Catholic Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who has been accused of collaborating with the rebels, to stop. Neither the Zapatistas nor the bishop immediately responded.

The Chiapas legislature approved his request to leave his office and named a federal congressman, Julio Cesar Ruiz Ferro, as interim governor.

The significance of Mr. Robledo's decision depends on rebel response, which because of the remoteness of the Chiapas region could take days to become known. It was uncertain if his action would appease the rebels, who also want land reform and a withdrawal of army troops.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army has demanded the resignation of Mr. Robledo, who they said was elected fraudulently. Mr. Robledo offered at his December inauguration to step down if the rebels disarm.

Election observers said they saw some voting irregularities but found no evidence of widespread fraud.

Mr. Robledo's opponents contend Amado Avendaño of the leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party won the Aug. 21 election. They swore him in as the head of an "alternative government" in December.

Mr. Avendaño, a lawyer and newspaper publisher from San Cristobal de Las Casas, said Tuesday that Mr. Robledo's departure "helps relax the terrible climate of tension in Chiapas."

"But it is only one of the conditions," Mr. Avendaño said. "We need peace in Chiapas, but we won't have peace until the soldiers go back to their barracks."

The national government maintains Mr. Robledo's status is a local affair. However, several governors were forced out by former President Carlos Salinas De Gortari.

Mr. Robledo said he acted independently. "Now it is up to the rest to contribute to the re-establishment of peace and social order in Chiapas," he said.

President Ernesto Zedillo asked the rebel leader, Subcomandante Marcos, to clarify his intent to find a peaceful solution. Mr. Zedillo said he would order the army to avoid confrontation with the rebels.

The Zapatistas began fighting in Chiapas on Jan. 1, 1994, demanding rights and services for the region's impoverished Indians. More than 145 people were killed before a ceasefire 12 days later.

Under pressure from the military and investors to resolve the conflict in Chiapas, Mr. Zedillo's government authorized a major army push into the rebels' territory Thursday.

The army offensive worries human rights groups.

Academy Award nominees set sights on Oscar gold

LOS ANGELES (Agencies) — The movie studios that produced such leading Oscar contenders as Forrest Gump and Pulp Fiction wasted no time Wednesday in mounting full-scale campaigns to cash in on their films' success.

The names of this year's Academy Award nominees had hardly rolled off the presenters' lips at Tuesday's ceremony when studio publicists were putting together bold-faced newspaper ads touting the movies and actors on Hollywood's A-list.

Given the potential to add millions of dollars to a movie's take at the box office and in video rentals, film industry executives were eager to capitalise on the avalanche of publicity generated by the promise of striking Oscar gold.

The box-office hit Forrest Gump — which led the field with 13 nominations, one shy of the Oscar record set by All About Eve in 1950 — was being prepared for a re-release Friday on more than 1,000 movie screens across the United States.

In one of the strongest showings in Oscar history, Forrest Gump, the whimsical tale of a kind-hearted simpleton and his close brushes with fame, was nominated for Best Picture, Best Actor (Tom Hanks), Best Director (Robert Zemeckis) and Best Supporting Actor (Gary Sinise).

It was the first time a film has piled up 13 nominations since the 1966 classic drama Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? — a success all the more notable considering Gump drifted in Hollywood purgatory for eight years before Paramount Pictures decided to produce it.

Adding to the pre-Oscar hype, Hanks has emerged as the betting favourite to become one of an elite few who have won back-to-back Best Actor awards.

"Forrest Gump rode a wave of baby-boomer nostalgia to become the fourth-highest-grossing picture of all time with more than \$300 million in box-office receipts before it was pulled from theatres several weeks ago in preparation for its triumphant post-nomination return."

But, as Oscar season shifts into high gear, the contenders that stand to reap the biggest gains — at least in percentage terms — are the smaller films.

Also competing for best picture honours are: the ultra-violent satire Pulp Fiction, Robert Redford's Quiz Show, the prison drama The Shawshank Redemption and the British comedy Four Weddings and A Funeral.

The awards will be handed out on March 27 at the shrine auditorium in a glitzy ceremony that is expected to attract more than one billion television viewers worldwide.

In the leadup to Hollywood's biggest show, Disney's Miramax Films is ready to aggressively promote Pulp Fiction, which captured nominations for John Travolta for best actor, Quentin Tarantino for Best Director, Samuel Jackson for Best Supporting Actor and Uma Thurman for Best Supporting Actress.

The film — a dark, bloody and strangely comical tale of hit men cruising the underworld — has already pulled in a healthy \$75 million in ticket receipts and is expected to do even better now that it has the Oscar stamp of approval.

A big push is also expected for Miramax's box-office lightweight: Woody Allen's Bullets Over Broadway, which received seven nominations but has barely cracked \$10 million in ticket sales and foreign-language

Heavy casualties reported in Cambodian fighting

PHNOM PENH (R) — Wounded soldiers said Wednesday the Cambodian army had suffered hundreds of casualties, most of them in mine blasts, in a drive against Khmer Rouge guerrillas in the far northern province of Preah Vihear.

"The new strategy of the Khmer Rouge includes planting a lot of new mines," said a senior government official with close knowledge of the fighting.

The problem for the soldiers now is a mine problem the Khmer Rouge are trying to increase the laying of mines and (bamboo) spikes," he told Reuters.

A colonel just returned from fighting in Preah Vihear, in which he said more than 3,000 government soldiers were involved, said casualties since January were in the hundreds.

"Everywhere mines. Not so many soldiers are getting killed in fighting, but many are killed from mines," said the colonel, who asked not to be named.

"Since November, hundreds of soldiers have been killed or wounded on the Preah Vihear battlefield. The ones who are killed are cremated there," said Kruoch Sareun, 25, a soldier based in Preah Vihear.

Kruoch Sareun had his right arm blown off above the elbow while trying to defuse a booby-trapped landmine.

Hospital records shown to Reuters Wednesday listed more than 170 wounded soldiers admitted to the Phnom Penh military hospital since Jan. 1.

Hospital officials said most of the injured were mine casualties and that there had been a sharp increase in the flow of wounded from the northern front this month.

One officer wounded by Khmer Rouge rifle fire said the fighting was taking place in difficult terrain.

"If this fighting keeps on for another two years all the soldiers there will die," said a 28-year-old company commander called Iam.

He was wounded in the left arm in a clash with Khmer Rouge near a recently captured rebel base at Preah Prolei, 20 km (12 miles) west of Preah Vihear Temple.

The guerrillas have laid mines on the approaches to the temple, which sits atop the Dangrek Mountains straddling the Thai-Cambodian border. It was captured by the Khmer Rouge in 1993.

The 10th century temple, a potent symbol of Khmer nationalism, was the subject of a bitter ownership dispute with Thailand, which the World Court decided in Cambodia's favour in 1962.

Other casualties, again mostly from mines, have been reported from a second front close to the Khmer Rouge's main northern base at Anlong Veng, briefly captured by the government last year and then retaken by the Maoist guerrillas.

"There's fighting every day around Preah Vihear Temple and Anlong Veng. Every day five or six soldiers are killed or wounded in my area, mostly by mines," Chhem Seung said.

"There are mines everywhere," said the 35-year-old former Khmer Rouge guerrilla wounded in operations against his old comrade around Anlong Veng and now recovering after having his left leg amputated above the knee.

He said he trod on a mine during a scouting mission close to Anlong Veng.

Chhem Seung said he defected with 280 Khmer Rouge in the northern province of Siem Reap late last year and that along with 80 of his colleagues had been integrated into the Cambodian army and ordered back into action.

Manila orders forces strengthened in Spratlys

MANILA (R) — Philippine President Fidel Ramos Wednesday ordered a strengthening of the nation's military and naval forces on the disputed Spratly Islands and increased surveillance of a reef occupied by China.

"I have ordered the Department of Defence to strengthen, within our limited capabilities, our defence posture and our naval presence in the Kalayaan Group and to intensify its aerial surveillance over Pangasinan Reef," Mr. Ramos said in a statement after a meeting of the National Security Council.

He said the Philippines was also lodging a strong diplomatic protest with China over its building of substantial structures on the Pangasinan Reef, the Philippine name for Mischief Reef in the South China Sea.

The Philippine president, a former armed forces commander, gave no details of the defence buildup but said Manila would exhaust all diplomatic options to resolve the "emerging crisis" before doing anything else.

Although Mr. Ramos saw no reason for undue alarm, he added, "at the same time we all realise that, while hoping for the best, we must prepare for the worst," he did not elaborate.

Manila released pictures last week showing that China had deployed ships and built a series of structures on stilts over its building of substantial structures on the Pangasinan Reef, the Philippine name for Mischief Reef in the South China Sea.

"Our government can come to no other conclusion but that the Chinese have established a new outpost and a possible naval support installation well within and in the middle of our exclusive economic zone," he said.

China and the Philippines are among six nations that claim all or part of the Spratlys, a series of small islands and reefs that are considered potentially rich in oil and gas.

Mr. Ramos said China had given an official explanation that the occupation was ordered by low-level personnel acting "without the knowledge and consent of the Chinese government."

But Manila, which learned of China's action last month when Filipino fishermen detained by Chinese forces, believed the issue was of concern to all nations interested in the long-term stability of the South China Sea, he said.

Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo, briefing reporters after the Security Council meeting, said China's occupation of the reef threatened the peace and stability of the whole region.

Pictures of China's installations showed structures similar to others it had built elsewhere in the South China Sea to reinforce its claim to all the islands.

Lovers around the world celebrate Valentine's Day

LONDON (R) — More starry-eyed lovers than ever celebrated St. Valentine's Day Tuesday, with gifts of red roses, candle-lit dinners and mile-high marriage proposals.

And that meant a worldwide shortage of red roses.

Russian lovers, suddenly flush after decades of communism, bought thousands of the flowers, driving prices beyond even the inflated levels traditional around St. Valentine's Day.

In Asia, the annual festival had added piquancy because it coincided for the first time in 19 years with the Chinese calendar's version of St. Valentine's Day.

Lantern Festival, which falls on the 15th day of the first lunar month, was once the only day of the year when young Chinese couples were allowed to walk alone together.

Russia and many other former Soviet countries have only recently adopted St. Valentine's Day from the West.

"Please don't forget that St. Valentine's Day is a day for lovers. Try to be more gentle to each other," Russian Television said at the end of its newscast.

The streets of the Ukrainian capital Kiev were full of men carrying bouquets of flowers — even though a single rose at the main market cost 300,000 karbovnets (\$2) — compared to the average monthly wage of less than \$20.

The hugely-inflated price of red roses — the flowers the goddess of love Aphrodite placed in the tomb of her dead lover — failed to dampen the ardour of the world's flower-buying lovers.

Young Chinese men, enriched by 16 years of market reforms, were buying them by the dozen at up to 30 yuan (\$3.50) each.

In Hong Kong, the enamoured were paying double the usual price for a flower arrangement.

But in the United States, a television show warned that the gift of red roses could carry a serious health risk.

An untold number of the 60 million roses imported from flowers farms in Colombia, where half of the blooms imported for Valentine's Day came from, were coated with the residue of dangerous cancer-causing pesticides, it said.

The report quoted a toxicologist, Dr. Samuel Epstein, as saying that being near the blossoms presents "a significant risk of cancer and a significant risk of birth defects."

Meanwhile a group calling itself the American Gender Society was calling for a "just don't do it, America," national day of celibacy.

The American Gender Society wants to see St. Valentine's Day replaced by a St. Uncumber Day.

St. Uncumber was a Portuguese princess who prayed that she might become physically repellent so she would not have to marry the King of Sicily. Her prayers were answered when overnight she grew a full beard and moustache. Her angry father then had her crucified.

In Japan's earthquake-ravaged town of Kobe, volunteers pedalled bicycles through the ruined streets to deliver St. Valentine's Day chocolates to surprised refugees.

"I feel deeply moved that people haven't forgotten us here after a month in the shelter," said 64-year-old Sakae Onishi after "Operation Res-Cupid" visited her family's makeshift home in an elementary school gymnasium.

The celebrations even got grudging approval from the sceptical authorities of Singapore, where a record 1,099 couples planned to marry on St. Valentine's Day.

"Western practice is not in itself pariah. It is only so if the values it imports are dubious," said the pro-government Straits Times newspaper, commenting on the marriage marathon.

The London Times newspaper said 50 men intended to propose in the clouds during a 1,000 pound (\$1,565) a head flight over the Bay of Biscay in the supersonic Concorde.

In the tiny town of Saint-Valentin in western France, dozens of newly-wed and betrothed couples gathered to celebrate the day with a procession, dancing and a competition for the "most languorous kiss."

And in London, 100 British couples, some of whom had met only moments earlier, cast aside their traditional reserve to take part in a five-minute-long kiss for eternity.

Widow scoops highest-ever individual lottery prize

KIEL, Germany (AFP) — A 63-year-old widow smashed the record for highest individual prize in Germany's National Lottery, scooping more than 15 million marks (\$8.5 million) on Tuesday.

Organisers said Tuesday's unnamed lucky winner lives in the north Schleswig-Holstein region, described the payout as a "vine intervention."

Learning she was the player with all six numbers in Saturday's draw, the person syndicate shared winnings of 20.5 million marks, the most ever on a ticket.

NEWPORT, England (AFP) — A British woman who lost her husband and three children for a Masai warrior met while on vacation in Kenya last year married her new love on Valentine's Day.

Cheryl Mason, 33, tied the knot Tuesday wearing a traditional red Masai gown decorated with prints of palm trees. In the wedding in the town of the Isle of Wight, she also sported a slew of bracelets and necklaces that were gifts from the family of her fiancé, David Lekimemo, 24, Ms. Mason met Mr. Lekimemo at a tourist hotel in the northeast Kenyan town of Samburu where he worked as a dancer.

So smitten was Ms. Mason that she left her husband and kids, moved back to Kenya and lived with Mr. Lekimemo in a hut. They moved back to England in November.

Valentine's Day with a taste of Africa

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Scandalous Oscar gets abbey niche

LONDON (AFP) — Oscar Wilde, the Victorian wit and writer who fell from grace over a homosexual relationship and died in poverty in Paris, got his revenge on British society when a plaque to his memory was inscribed in Westminster Abbey.

The ceremony in the abbey's Poet's Corner, where the "giants of English literature" are buried or commemorated, was attended by numerous British acting stars, including Sir John Gielgud and Dame Judi Dench. It took place 100 years to the day after Wilde's most famous play, The Importance of Being Earnest, opened in London.

The Irish-born author's name adorns those of Lord Byron and D.H. Lawrence, both of them no strangers to controversy, above the tomb of Queen Victoria's favourite, Alfred Lord Tennyson. This year also marks the centenary of Wilde's arrest after a libel action he took against the Marquess of Queensberry, father of his homosexual lover, Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas.

Wilde, now 64 and a public figure, was arrested in 1895 on charges of gross indecency. He was sentenced to two years' hard labour for indecent behaviour. He was imprisoned in his poem The Ballad of Reading Jail but the experience and the scandal broke him. On release he went to Paris, where he died in 1900 at the age of 44, and was buried. The officials of Westminster Abbey have stressed that Wilde is being honoured for his literary talents alone, regardless of his private life.

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Actress needs dark windows to change behind

BANGKOK (R) — A popular actress Sunday joined opponents of a Thai government plan to limit the use of tinted car windows, saying people in the entertainment industry needed to change in cars while on location.

Rakkarnde said she opposed the government proposal that starting next month, car windows must allow at least 50 per cent of sunlight through. "Some times we have to get changed in the cars during a show. It is troublesome being a star always crowded around by the public," she was quoted in Sunday's Thai-language Daily News as saying.

A government committee chaired by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai met on Feb. 24 to review the regulation, prompted by police concerns about safety and crime prevention. Some politicians and many car-owners say the regulation will be a licence for corrupt traffic police.

WASHINGTON (AP) — NATO should not give up its special treaty without giving it to the West.

The organisation's Belgian Premier Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe has proposed a security treaty without Russia is a "mistake," he said.

He said the enlargement of NATO and the addition of new members should be placed on Russia's own agenda.

"The NATO as a many car-owners say the regulation will be a licence for corrupt traffic police."

Relief aid del

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — A Serb-controlled region has given the United Nations a list of relief aid deliveries to the region, which is facing a humanitarian crisis.

A U.N. spokesman said Tuesday that the list included 44 tonnes of relief goods on its way to Bihaq, a town in the northwestern Bosnian region controlled by Croatian Serbs.

The official said the aid was being sent by a U.N. plane from Zagreb.

Under the Dayton Accords, the U.N. is supposed to deliver humanitarian aid to the region.

Things are getting worse in the region, said a U.N. official. The region is facing a humanitarian crisis, with thousands of people displaced and many more in need of food and shelter.

The official said the aid was being sent by a U.N. plane from Zagreb.

Yeltsin hopes to b

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin hopes to restore his power in the Russian parliament, which he said would take a "decisive step" to support him.

Yeltsin, now 64 and a public figure, was arrested in 1995 on charges of gross indecency. He was sentenced to two years' hard labour for indecent behaviour. He was imprisoned in his poem The Ballad of Reading Jail but the experience and the scandal broke him. On release he went to Paris, where he died in 1900 at the age of 44, and was buried. The officials of Westminster Abbey have stressed that Wilde is being honoured for his literary talents alone, regardless of his private life.

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This photo shows Actor John Travolta as Vincent Vega in the movie Pulp Fiction. Travolta was nominated for Best Performance by an Actor in the 67th Annual academy Awards. Pulp Fiction was also nominated for seven other awards including Best Picture and Best Director (AFP photo)



Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences President Arthur Hiller (left) and actress Angela Bassett announce the nominations for Best Picture for the 67th Annual Academy Awards (AFP photo)

nominee Strawberry Chocolate, a hit in its native Cuba but barely registering in the U.S. market.

Hanks, last year's winner for his role as an AIDS-infected attorney in Philadelphia, faces tough competition not only from Travolta but from screen legend Paul Newman in Nobody's Fool, Morgan Freeman in The Shawshank Redemption and Nigel Hawthorne in The Madness of King George.

"I feel like I've rekindled my whole career," Travolta, a former teen heartthrob who was last nominated 17 years ago for Saturday Night Fever, said in an interview on ABC TV's Good Morning America.

The nominees for Best Actress are two-time winner Jodie Foster for Nell, Jessica Lange for Blue Sky, Miranda Richardson for Tom Viv.

Winona Ryder in Little Women and Susan Sarandon for The Client.

Along with Zemeckis and Tarantino, the contenders for Best Director are Robert Redford for Quiz Show, Allen for Bullets Over Broadway and Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski for Red.

The other nominees for Best Foreign-Language film are Before the Rain from Macedonia, Burnt By the Sun from Russia, Eat Drink Man Woman from Taiwan and Farinelli: Il Castrato from Belgium.

Meanwhile, it was just the kind of unexpected good news Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski needed after hearing about car insurance rates in Poland.

His film Red, the third part of a trilogy, was nominated for Oscars in the Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best Cinematography categories.

"I am glad the film got the nomination because it helps a film," Kieslowski, 53, told the Associated Press in a telephone interview from his Warsaw apartment Tuesday.

"Many people come to see a film nominated for an Oscar and the reason to make films is to have people see them," the director said.

The U.S. distributor of Red, Miramax, called Kieslowski with the good news Tuesday afternoon, catching him between calls to his car insurance agent.

"Yes, the news did sweeten that otherwise sad moment," Kieslowski said, complaining about the high insurance rate for his French-made Renault Safrane.



Ecuadorian soldiers cheer at the military post of Condor Mirador, close to the Peruvian border, after a ceasefire was to have come into force Tuesday at 1700 GMT. Peruvian

President Alberto Fujimori formally announced the ceasefire late Monday, accepted by Ecuador (AFP photo)

Relief aid deliveries to Bihac resume

GENEVA (Agencies) — Separatist leaders of Croatia's Serb-controlled Krajina region have given the green light for the resumption of relief aid deliveries to the northwest Bosnian region of Bihac, which is facing famine, a U.N. spokesman said Wednesday.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Ron Edmundson said: "We finalised an agreement yesterday for a passage of regular convoys each week."

He noted that a convoy carrying 94 tonnes of relief aid was on its way to Bihac. The trucks underwent inspections by Croatian Serb cops at the Sisak checkpoint after a Croatian commander said they were heading for the south of theclave.

Since October last year the UNHCR has only managed to send 12 humanitarian convoys with a total of 870 tonnes of food to Bihac, instead of the 8,000 tonnes needed, Redmond said.

The last convoy arrived in the region last Thursday. The UNHCR will charter

another convoy Thursday in ship relief aid to Velika Kladusa, which is under the control of Serb-backed Fikret Abdic, a Muslim leader in revolt against the Bosnian government. About 30,000 civilians live in Velika Kladusa.

Under Tuesday's agreement the UNHCR may send three humanitarian convoys a week to Cazaj and one to Velika Kladusa, said Mr. Redmond.

U.N. officials in Zagreb said two convoys with humanitarian aid for the civilian population and U.N. peacekeepers left the Croatian capital early Wednesday.

The officials said some cases of malnutrition in the Muslim enclave were serious. Meanwhile France, presenting a new five-power peace initiative, will offer Serbia relief from U.N. sanctions later this week in return for recognition of Bosnia and Croatia, diplomats said Wednesday.

"Things are moving forward," French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Catherine Colonna told reporters.

The proposal will be put to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic with a view to a ceremony of mutual recognition by the three former Yugoslav republics at a Paris summit in March.

The United States opened the way for the initiative by the five-nation contact group, which also includes Russia, Germany, Britain and France, by agreeing Tuesday to offer Serbia relief from U.N. sanctions in exchange for compliance.

Diplomats said the key lever was the offer of a temporary suspension of all economic sanctions against Belgrade if Mr. Milosevic formally recognised his neighbours, thereby renouncing an earlier dream of a greater Serbia.

By doing so, he would raise pressure on rebel Bosnian Serbs to accept a contact group peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, dividing the territory roughly 50-50 between a Muslim-Croat federation and the Serbs. The Bosnian Serbs' self-proclaimed parliament formally rejected the plan Monday.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said this month that the initiative was a last chance to prevent a resumption of fighting in Bosnia and Croatia, with the dangers of a withdrawal of U.N. peacekeepers and a general conflagration in the Balkans.

Belgrade accused Washington Wednesday of seeking to dominate other countries mediating in the Bosnia conflict, after the White House approved a partial easing of sanctions against Serbia if it recognised Bosnia and Croatia.

The official Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, said that "what the White House says it accepts, is in fact its own plan submitted to the contact group."

On Tuesday, a senior U.S. official said President Bill Clinton had approved a plan to lift some economic sanctions against Serbia if Belgrade recognises Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia and thus renounces any ambition to forge a "greater Serbia."

To date, Belgrade has steadfastly rejected all attempts.

Confusion reigns about key post in Peru-Ecuador border war

LIMA, Peru (R) — A tenuous ceasefire in Peru and Ecuador's 21-day-old conflict in a disputed border zone went into effect but confusion reigned about the location of a key hilltop post and whose forces controlled it.

Peru said it ordered its forces to "strictly adhere" to a ceasefire that took effect at noon Tuesday, adding that its naval forces were withdrawing from "strategic positions" and armoured vehicles were returning to their bases.

But shortly afterwards, the Peruvian Joint Chiefs of Staff said the Tiwinza Post was being pounded by "intense artillery fire" from the Coangos Base two miles (3.2 kilometres) away inside Ecuador, a charge Ecuador denied saying the base was still in its control.

"Why are they (the Ecuadorians) not adhering to the ceasefire?" a General Daniel Mora, head of the army's information office told a news conference. "I think they are not in the positions they are alleging."

There was no independent verification if Peruvian and Ecuadorian forces, both of which claim to hold the posts where the fighting has taken place since Jan. 26, had silenced their guns.

In Quito, President Sixto Duran Ballen said Ecuador would respect the ceasefire declared by Peru Monday night but that Ecuadorian forces would remain in their positions.

The fighting has taken place in mountainous, jungle terrain at the headwaters of the Cenepa River along a 48-mile (77-kilometre) stretch of the Cordillera Del

Condor where the border between the two countries was never clearly marked in a 1942 treaty.

Gen. Mora said Peruvian troops were in positions of security at Tiwinza, a post surrounded by 3,937 feet (1,200-metre) high hills over an area of 12 square miles (30 square kilometres). And would respond if attacked. But he said Peru had no intention of hitting bases in Ecuador.

Asked if Peruvian forces were in total control of the zone, he said: "When we say we have made the final attack it means we have broken up their defensive positions, which has forced Ecuadorian troops to withdraw."

He reiterated statements made by Mr. Fujimori Monday night that the Peruvian flag was flying at the base and

two others taken on Jan. 27 and Feb. 2 but that there were no photos available yet of the area.

Mr. Duran Ballen said the three posts and two others which Peru does not dispute are Ecuadorian were still in Ecuadorian hands.

Foreign journalists taken by Ecuadorian military to Tiwinza said they had seen an Ecuadorian flag flying at what they described as logistical base, adding it was in control of Ecuador and there were no Peruvians to be seen.

"They have probably taken them to a peaceful zone very close to the border and shown them a base they said is Tiwinza but which really isn't," Gen. Mora said, adding Ecuador has historically established bases inside Peru which carry identical names as positions in their

own territory. Thirty-eight Peruvians were dead in the fighting and another 104 more wounded although some casualty reports still had to be received, Gen. Mora said.

Ecuador says 10 soldiers have died and 37 have been wounded. But unofficially, the casualty figures on both sides are reported to be higher.

The 1942 Rio De Janeiro Protocol sought to settle the two nations' conflicting historical claims to a vast region in the Amazon by setting the boundaries along a 1,060-mile (1,706-kilometre) stretch which includes the Cordillera Del Condor. Ecuador rejected the treaty in 1960 and periodic clashes have occurred in the zone ever since, including a two-day war in 1981.



A field medic attends a Peruvian soldier injured during clashes with Ecuadorian troops near the Peru-Ecuador border. The soldier was (AFP photo)

French conservatives call for end to rivalry

PARIS (R) — Supporters of conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur appealed for an end to the right's "suicidal" rivalry Wednesday after a poll showed Socialist challenger Lionel Jospin neck-and-neck with the premier.

Mr. Jospin's surge added zip to a lacklustre race dented for weeks by the premier's wide lead. Now, Mr. Balladur's standing has plunged, according to the IFOP opinion poll, to be published by the weekly magazine L'Express Thursday.

It was one of three surveys which showed a steep fall in Mr. Balladur's popularity for the first round of the April-May election.

But all three polls said he would win the May 7 run-off by margins ranging from eight to 16 per cent over this probable rivals — Jospin or Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac.

The shock poll sparked bitter recrimination between the Balladur and Chirac camps, estranged brothers to the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR). Mr. Balladur's aides insisted the real battle was against Mr. Jospin.

Government spokesman Philippe Douste-Blazy warned the right against repeating disputes that opened the way to the election of Socialist President Francois Mitterrand in 1981 and 1988.

"I won't play this petty, suicidal game. Don't play a new game of Russian roulette with six bullets in the revolver," he told France Inter



French Prime Minister and presidential candidate Edouard Balladur meets with supporters in Montefmar, south of France. Mr. Balladur, whose presidential programme has been widely

Radio. "The latest polls show that the left will make it to the second round, so all attacks must focus on the left," echoed Nicolas Sarkozy, Mr. Balladur's spokesman.

Mr. Chirac's camp has recently concentrated its fire on Mr. Balladur rather than on Mr. Jospin, accusing the premier of being out of touch with voters and inactive.

Mr. Jospin's decisive start buoyed Socialists who had all but given up hope of a strong showing in the election since former European Commission President Jacques Delors dropped out.

"This is clearly an erosion in Balladur's ranking," said Dominique Strauss-Kahn,

one of Mr. Jospin's top campaign advisers. "Jospin is beginning to interest and grab people."

Mr. Jospin is to announce this week his campaign staff, with Mr. Delors as the head of his support committees and Mr. Delors's daughter, ex-Labour Minister Martine Aubry, as his spokeswoman.

The IFOP poll said Mr. Jospin, chosen as Socialist candidate two weeks ago, could lead Mr. Balladur 23-22 per cent if centrist ex-premier Raymond Barre also ran in the April 23 first round, further splitting the centre-right vote.

If Mr. Barre did not run, Mr. Balladur would lead Mr. Jospin 24-23 per cent. Mr.

Barre is to announce his intentions later this month.

The two other surveys, by polling institutes BVA and Sofres, showed Mr. Balladur still at least five points clear of Mr. Jospin in the first round.

Student leaders Wednesday maintained a call for a march on Mr. Balladur's office Thursday although the government, keen to avoid unrest in the run-up to the election, caved in to their week-long protests.

The government cancelled a decree tightening admission to university and shelved an official report urging a hike in registration fees. But students said they wanted the report abandoned altogether.

Yeltsin hopes to boost image in major speech

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin sets out to restore his tarnished credentials and firm his grip on power in state of the nation speech Tuesday which will take a 40-minute trip at the Chechenya airport.

Yeltsin, now 64 and seen in public staggering on a summit meeting in Kazakhstan, also needs to convince disillusioned Russian voters and worried foreign leaders that he is still capable of governing the world's largest country.

The president's message an historic document, one which historians of the 21st century will try to unravel the sense of what Yeltsin and his circle wanted to do with Russia," the daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta said.

This year's address to a session of the two chambers of parliament is particularly significant because of a blow dealt by the Chechenya crisis in Mr. Yeltsin's presidency, due to run in mid-1996.

The president's popularity has sunk, his authority has been weakened and his democratic credentials have been tarnished by the fighting

which erupted after he sent troops on Dec. 11 to smash the region's independence bid.

Mr. Yeltsin's speech, expected to last 40 minutes and summarise a 120-page document, affords him a chance of a reprieve.

He has turned to his liberal aides to boost his image ahead of the presidential elections and commit himself to democracy.

"Boris Yeltsin's message to the Federal Assembly, which the head of state will present tomorrow in the Kremlin, sums up the reformist ideas of Russia's top minds," Viktor Ilyushin, Mr. Yeltsin's top adviser, told ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mr. Yeltsin is expected to distance himself from the unpopular Chechenya campaign and signal the start of major army reforms.

"The Chechenya events... have given rise to a number of problems concerning the system of state power and army reforms," one Kremlin source told Interfax News Agency.

"He will make... a critical analysis of the military approach to the resolution of the Chechen problem."

The speech is not seen as a forum for dismissals but speculation is rife that Defence Minister Pavel Grachev's job is on the line and a new approach to Chechenya is in the works.

A shaky truce covering heavy arms in Chechenya has

created a slightly less warlike backdrop, apparently with the aim of boosting Mr. Yeltsin's credibility when he stands before parliament.

Mr. Yeltsin is expected to reaffirm faith in economic reform by outlining plans to curb inflation, which hit 17.8 per cent in January alone, and proposing ways to stick to a tight budget.

These moves are vital for winning a \$6.25 billion standby loan from the International Monetary Fund and restoring the faith of nervous foreign investors and potential aid donors.

Meanwhile everybody knows Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's propensity for slanging matches, his sympathies with the German far right, his megalomania about restoring Greater Russia.

But this Russian politician who worries the West so much as head of his country's second largest parliamentary force has also become one of the last sources of support for President Yeltsin.

Each time the Kremlin has pressing need of a blank cheque from parliament, Mr. Zhirinovskiy's misleadingly named Liberal Democratic Party, which he founded in 1989, steps forward to oblige.

Mr. Yeltsin's cherished civil peace pact be set so much store by to heal the wounds of the October 1993 parliamentary battle could not have been signed last April without Mr. Zhirinovskiy. His 60 MPs were the first

to back the government's 1995 budget, whose approval on second reading inspires optimism about getting \$6.4 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Until a few months ago, the support was low key, with Mr. Zhirinovskiy serving as something of a bugbear for a Yeltsin anxious to show the outside world he alone could contain the country's extremist pressures.

But when both communists and liberals — the latter including Yegor Gaidar, for so long Mr. Yeltsin's most loyal associate — spoke out fiercely against Russia's military push against secessionist Chechenya, Mr. Zhirinovskiy stood alone with the authorities.

"If I was giving the orders, Grozny (the Chechen capital) would become one big bomb crater," Mr. Zhirinovskiy declared last in January. The Russian army has since largely fulfilled his wish.

Party number two Alexander Vengerovskiy, regarded as its resident philosopher, explained that it stood for "stabilisation of Russian society, consolidation of state institutions and a strong and respected army. We support everything that tends in that direction."

The Liberal Democratic Party is also hopeful of getting into government one day. Mr. Zhirinovskiy has made no secret of that ambition.

Dehaene: Bind Russia, NATO by special treaty

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last December, President Clinton touched off an uproar at a European summit in Budapest by alleging that the partnership for Peace plan opening the way for former Warsaw Pact nations to join NATO represents a Western effort to split the continent. Several days earlier, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozirev refused to sign the agreement linking Russia to the alliance.

Although the differences were subsequently said to have been overcome, NATO still is searching for a way to draw Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia into full NATO membership while simultaneously creating a constructive relationship with Moscow.

"A stable working relationship, consisting of dialogue and predictability could probably be created by concluding a treaty between Russia and NATO over and beyond the Partnership for Peace," Mr. Dehaene told a gathering organised by the European Institute.

"We do not want any new dividing lines in Europe, which might give Russia the impression of being excluded," he told a luncheon organised by the Washington-based think tank. The European Institute was hosting the Belgian leader on the sixth day of his week-long visit to the United States and the United Nations.

Following talks with U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, Mr. Dehaene and Foreign Minister Frank Vandebrouke briefed reporters on contents of the possible new accord with Moscow.

They proposed that a mechanism be created requiring consultation with Russia on political and military matters under NATO consideration without giving Moscow veto rights.

Several Western officials, among them Mr. Perry and British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind, have suggested in the past concluding a treaty with Russia recognising that country's special status within Europe. But Mr. Dehaene's proposal appeared the most detailed so far.

In a related development, Mr. Dehaene agreed "in principle" to Mr. Perry's request to send a Belgian Navy frigate to the Gulf to help enforce U.N. sanctions against Iraq. Belgian officials said.

The warship — one of only three frigates in the Belgian Navy — would not be dispatched before October.

Mandela in good health but will not seek new term

CAPE TOWN (R) — South African President Nelson Mandela Wednesday pronounced himself fit for his age, but ruled out serving a second term after elections in 1999.

"Oh no, definitely not," Mr. Mandela, 76, told Reuters when asked if he would seek to extend his five-year term as South Africa's first democratically elected head of state.

In a broad-ranging interview at his Cape Town office, a smiling Mandela, widely seen as the key stabilising factor in South Africa's delicate transition from white minority rule, said:

"In 1999 I will be 79 or 80. I don't think an octogenarian should be meddling with political affairs."

"I would like to give over to a younger man. I will be available for advice if they want me, but to occupy a position as a head of state, definitely, I won't take that risk."

Mr. Mandela, who has headed a multi-party government of national unity since winning historic all-race elections last April, did not indicate he would not be re-elected. First Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, 52, is widely regarded as the most likely candidate.

Asked about occasional speculation on financial markets that he was in poor health, he replied: "I think somebody is gaining a lot through spreading these rumours."

"For my age I think I am in reasonably good health. I enjoy walks. One of my favourite hobbies is to walk... sometimes I take three, four and even as much as five five hours just walking. A person whose health is frail would not do that. Ask my security guards."

Joined by South Africa's former white rulers for 27 years, Mr. Mandela still maintains his prison regime, rising at 4:30 each morning and often walking for an hour before beginning his day-long engagements at dawn.

Mr. Mandela, frequently called in to mediate in even minor party or political disputes, was asked about allegations of misuse of foreign aid funds by his estranged wife Winnie and preacher-politician Allan Boesak, who this week withdrew as ambassador-designate to the United Nations in Geneva.

Showing no emotion and referring to his wife as "Mrs. Mandela," he said judgment should be suspended on her conduct until an investigation had been completed, and any

action against Mr. Boesak would depend on the outcome of a separate inquiry.

He added: "I think the way we have handled the Boesak affair indicates the firmness of the ANC, but the caution it exercises before it takes any action."

Mr. Boesak has been accused by Scandinavian donors of using for his own purposes funds intended for the Foundation for Peace and Justice he founded. He has denied the allegations.

Winnie, a deputy minister in her husband's government, is at the centre of a row over her leadership of the ANC Women's League and has been accused by former senior League members, of not passing on to it a 500,000 rand (\$140,000) donation from Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Winnie says the money was given to her to disburse to the needy as she wished.

Mr. Mandela, dressed in a loose-fitting blue and black casual shirt, said his government faced the monumental task of restructuring an entire nation in which the underprivileged black masses were demanding "houses today, not tomorrow."

He added that the budget to be presented to parliament

next month would be the first to reflect accurately the priorities of democratic rule and would address the wealth gap between the white minority and newly enfranchised blacks.

"We have been put into power by the poorest of the poor. We have to address their basic needs and therefore the budget must be geared to address the constituency that put us into power."

"The gap between Africans, coloured and Indians on the one hand and the white minority on the other is too big and it must be closed," he said.

Meanwhile armed police arrested a white man for striking a black child with a whip Wednesday in a racial flare-up over busing black pupils to a right-wing white Cape Town suburb.

Police frog-marched the man, from Ruyterwacht School trailed by about 1,000 singing and dancing pupils.

Witnesses said the boy was struck once with a sjambok — a long leather whip — but he did not appear to be hurt.

Police said they had found a can of petrol and wire-cutters next to the school's back fence Wednesday. Residents Tuesday threatened to burn down the school.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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Editorial and advertising offices:

Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 6671116, 670141-4

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

First court, second standards

AT LAST the International Tribunal on War Crimes committed in the Bosnian conflict has levelled charges against 21 Serbs with a view to begin court proceedings against them in a few weeks. Created by the U.N. Security Council in 1993, the international court is dependent on the authority and prestige of its sponsor to bring to justice all those who are suspected of perpetrating crimes against humanity. This would entail the extradition of suspects from many corners of the world, and the cooperation of U.N. member states would be vital for the success of this endeavour.

Being the first court of its kind to prosecute people charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity since the Nuremberg trials, there is some hope that the international community is ready and able to deal effectively with grave human rights violations on the scale of the Bosnian conflict.

The shortcomings of the Hague-based Court's action on the Bosnian situation lie in the fact that there are other equally serious war crimes committed elsewhere in the world that remain without action. What transpired in Grozny, for example, offers a classic example of international neglect of other areas of the world when dealing with crimes against humanity. Some countries in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia witnessed similar horrific violations but were all swept under the carpet by the international community. It would have been considerably more balanced and fair therefore for the Security Council to have established a permanent tribunal to deal with war crimes and crimes against humanity no matter where they occur.

The current ad hoc exercise to deal with these categories of mass violent crimes in one part of the world does not strike us as the most equitable formula. Likewise, other forms and dimensions of human rights violations, be they systematic or otherwise, also need attention. The establishment of an international human court with wide jurisdiction to prosecute any serious violator of human rights as set out in the international conventions would go a long way to weed out such abuses. The thrust of international interest in all such related issues must be streamlined and standardised in order to be integral and effective.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THERE MUST definitely be some action that should be taken on the part of the concerned authorities and public to curtail road accidents which have been on the increase in Jordan in the past few years, said Al Ra'i daily Wednesday. The paper said despite efforts exerted to control traffic, the Jordanian society is still plagued by accidents that kill or maim scores of innocent travellers and road users. "We believe that the Kingdom is not in need of the services of foreign experts or more seminars or lectures to help reduce the number of horrible accidents on our roads, but rather we need common sense in handling the vehicles under our disposal," said the daily. Drivers can and should control the speed of their vehicles, particularly on the highways, the concerned authorities can and should introduce effective measures to help stop the carnage, called the daily. The paper said that reckless driving and speeding are all the time blamed for most of the accidents, but this can be controlled and prevented before they cause further tragedies. The paper expressed hope that the joint public and private sectors' efforts will succeed in making the roads a safer place.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily criticised the U.S.-Israeli stand vis-a-vis what the Americans and the Israelis call Islamic terrorism, describing such stand as very serious and endangering the cause of peace in general and the Palestinian people's future in particular. Ibrahim Al Absi said that by considering the freedom fighters in Palestine as terrorists and by pressuring the Palestine National Authority (PNA) into cracking down hard on the Islamic groups, the U.S. and Israel are pushing hard for an inter-Palestinian conflict or civil war that would destroy the Palestinian people's hopes and aspirations. The writer said that it is impossible for the Palestinian leadership to ensure security for the Israeli society, something which the formidable Israeli military had failed to achieve. The solution for the current deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, he said, lies in Israel's withdrawal from Arab lands, the implementation of the Oslo deal and the liquidation of Israeli settlements in Arab-owned lands, continued the writer. He said that the Oslo deal was concluded for the sake of solving the chronic issue in Palestine; and therefore its implementation can surely guarantee an end to the bloodshed and violence. He said Israel can dream of no security as long as it continues to occupy Arab lands.

The View from Academia

Ramadan as a thermometer measuring sophistication

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoub

THERE IS no doubt that Ramadan is a special month. A different spirit, a different feeling, a different mood and a different mode of living prevails throughout. It does certainly have, in addition to its difficult and even trying moments, its own charm and beauty, for most people. Most importantly, however, Ramadan is essentially an opportunity, a challenge and a test.

During Ramadan, more so than during any other month of the year, Muslims are expected to devote more time to duties and responsibilities which they may be too busy (at times too neglectful) to fulfill or shoulder properly and effectively during other months. These include, among other things, worship (at home and in the mosque, during the day time and at night, the "obligatory" prayers and the voluntary and extra, etc.), religious education, visits to relatives and friends, consciousness of the needs of others (especially the poor and the needy).

At this particular level (i.e. with respect to all of the above), one detects in Ramadan a noticeable change indeed. As for prayers, for example, people generally go more often to the mosque than they normally do; in fact many persons who do not frequent the mosque in other months do so in Ramadan. People not only pray more, but they also pray more intensely, devotedly and with concentration. Ramadan is actually singled out as the month of prayer and worship, and rightly so.

Muslims also learn more about their religion than in other months. You find them reading the Holy Quran, the Hadith, the biographies of the various famous Muslim personalities, studies of miscellaneous theological matters, interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith, interpretations of interpretations, etc. They also watch T.V. programmes, listen to radio presentations, and read newspaper and magazine articles on religious matters. And they attend more lectures and sermons. Ramadan is not only a spiritual month, but it is also an intellectual month in many important ways. In it the knowledge of many increases and their minds are stimulated and sharpened. In a society, such as ours, in which very few people read and in which the environment is generally unintellectual, Ramadan comes to fill an important gap, for most people take seriously the religious material they read, watch or listen to.

During Ramadan, people also become aware of the importance of visiting relatives, especially ones they do not have time to visit during other months. Many, who are unable to do so for one reason or another in other months, make time for parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, ex-neighbours and friends. Many invite each other for iftar,

for dessert, and even for sahur. This is not only nice and fun (even though at times it can be a burden) but is also significant for it fosters ties, clears the air among relatives which may be quite polluted often, and opens closed bridges. Emotional support is quite needed where many relatives and friends live far apart and where modern life can be somewhat alienating and isolating. Even though some relatives and friends may be quite a nuisance, many others are a real pleasure to be with. In Ramadan, we in effect have a whole month of mother's day, father's day, sister's day, brother's day, grandmother's day and so on.

And people also remember the poor and the needy. In Ramadan, people feel obliged to think about the needs of the less fortunate. The whole idea behind fasting is to experience what it is like to be hungry or starving. In these times of economic hardship, unemployment, low payment, increase of the number of families living under the poverty lines, abrupt hikes in prices of various necessities, Ramadan can be the solution, at least a solution. People become noticeably more generous and more giving, thus complementing the work of many charitable institutions and department of social welfare which are unable to cope with the increasing needs of the needy.

All of this we highly appreciate. But Muslims are expected to do a lot more. For instance, they are supposed to pay serious attention to their physical health. Fasting is essentially a physical act. Its aim is to make people reflect on the actual needs of the body. Food is certainly a necessity and a pleasure, but it can also be quite harmful. For one thing one is not supposed to eat excessively; for another, one is supposed to be selective, focusing on the food which is most nutritious. The famous religious saying "fast, and you become healthy" spells out quite eloquently one of the main purposes of Ramadan: To encourage people to be healthier and more physically fit. Ramadan is (or ought to be, rather) an excellent diet programme, safe and free.

But Ramadan is supposed to be, also, a lesson in home economics and refined consumption habits. It aims to teach people to be good consumers — intelligent and wise, that is, not wasteful and lavish. The idea behind fasting is to emphasise to people that there are so many food items and goods that we do not actually need. This is one. The other point at this level is that one ought to learn to economise and to minimise one's purchases. Is the goal to starve during the day time and gulp and devour everything during the night time? Clearly not. Is the aim to empty the market of goods and create a food shortage (or a crisis, as we often call it)?

And Ramadan is supposed to be a psychological and moral exercise. People are expected to learn to be patient, tolerant, kind, nice, benign, courteous, loving, respectful, dutiful, responsible, efficient, alert, and so. What is special about Ramadan is that it places a person under pressure and expects this person to live up to the challenge and rise to the occasion. It is not a big deal for a person to be nice and charming after he/she has had a good night's sleep, eaten an excellent meal and drank a delicious cup of coffee or tea. The big deal is to be nice and courteous when one is hungry, thirsty, tired, sleepy and with a terrible headache. This is the real challenge, one which Ramadan poses.

On these three latter counts our society fails, and quite miserably. Most people I know gain weight in Ramadan. Rather than view food as a necessity only or a pleasure which is potentially fatal, they look at it as an end in itself and a pleasure to be indulged in. One fasts in order to eat. Some people I know eat and drink so much after the iftar that they are unable to move or even breathe. Generally, we buy more in Ramadan (much more) than in any other month. We do not care if the prices double or triple. And if we can't find an item closely, we are willing to drive tens of miles looking for it and waste hours in the process, rather than say, to help with it. This is "unramadan" and even "anti-ramadan," for Ramadan is a month which aims to teach the insignificance of so many goods and items.

But we fail the test at the psychological and moral level. Many become moody, impatient, intolerant, unkind, inefficient, irresponsible, hostile, sleepy and lazy. Most students take the advantage of Ramadan to daydream in class and be absent-minded. Most civil servants take advantage of it to abuse citizens even more boldly than on normal days. Drivers drive more recklessly than usual. Parents scream at their children more often than they usually do, and husbands seize the opportunity to abuse their wives. For many people, it is quite fashionable to be unsympathetic, inattentive, disrespectful and irresponsible. Where are these from the true spirit of Ramadan?

Ramadan is a noble, excellent and sophisticated idea. It takes a noble, excellent and sophisticated culture to get the most out of it.

Unfortunately, our present day culture is not sophisticated enough to reap the benefits of Ramadan. Should not car accidents decrease or even disappear in Ramadan? Should not our civil servants be a little more civil? Ramadan is perhaps the best thermometer by which we can test the nobility, excellence and sophistication of our culture — and naturally of our individual.

M. KAHIL



Algiers has to give the moderates a chance, and a reason, to emerge

by William Zartman

PARIS — The murderous explosion on Jan. 30 in the centre of Algiers shows more than ever the need to pursue dialogue. But it should be very clear that dialogue is being pursued. What is needed is not a dialogue of surrender but a dialogue that separates the murderers and brings together the forces of the country that favour a broadly based political system.

Such a process was attempted by the Algerian government last fall and by the Sant'Egidio Roman Catholic community in Rome in November and January. The collapse of both efforts shows that such a strategy requires patience and persistence.

An Algerian scholar friend recently reacted to the horrors perpetrated by the Armed Islamic Group by exclaiming, in dismay, "It's not Islamic." Such dismay has split earlier support for the Islamic movement, as it has split its leaders. One of the biggest mistakes in dealing with it is to impute to it a unity it never had, thereby creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The longer a rebel movement is unsuccessful in its bid for power, the greater the chance of a split over tactics. Religious and ideological movements are even more prone to internal splits.

The Islamicist movement in Algeria is no exception. It was born in controversy in 1991, over the proper tactics authorised by the religion: one wing sought to win power by elections while another resorted to general strikes and attacks on military installations.

Today, more than three years after the aborted elections, the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has no control over the Armed Islamic Group or Islamic Salvation Army, which in turn have no control over

the many contending groups that settle their accounts in the name of Islam. The Armed Islamic Group underwent an internal struggle in October to select its new emir. It posed impossible conditions to accepting the broad platform negotiated by the Islamic Salvation Front, among other political parties, under the aegis of the Sant'Egidio community. Splits and rivalries do not mean diminished violence, desperation and bravado — to the contrary. Rival leaders seek to capture the flag of the movement by emerging as the most spectacularly impressive tactician; the Christmas hijacking of the Air France Airbus and the Algiers bomb explosion testify to this.

But others begin to ask whether half a loaf would not be better, less costly and less risky than a fight to the bloody finish. The Islamic revolution is in angry pieces. A successful policy must play on those pieces.

In this situation, the best strategy for the government is to strengthen its own integrity and give opposing moderates a chance and a reason to emerge.

That chance and reason are offered through negotiations, such as those begun in Rome. The state itself cannot be part of those negotiations, but the government should welcome them (as it has not, yet) and, in the absence of a government party, the army should participate in them (as it has not, yet).

The negotiations to end the civil war in Mozambique, which Sant'Egidio also sponsored, offer a good parallel. But Algeria has special problems that complicate its case. One is the fact that the conflict in Algeria is not just over party platforms and participation; it is civilisational. The debate is long and deep. But it comes down to the fact that the Islamic movement does represent a part of the population (nearly 25 per

cent at the last electoral test in 1991) and some of that part at least needs to be coopted into the political system. There is risk in this strategy, but its only alternative is the certainty of surrender.

The other problem is that the government in Algeria is plagued by illegitimacy and ineffectiveness. Algeria is in a state of collapse. So was Mozambique. Thus, while attempting to provide internal security for its population, the government must take measures to broaden its own social base and restore its legitimacy.

This means, along with vigorous action against the militants, effective socioeconomic policies, and political cooperation and power-sharing with the secular parties of the opposition.

The government would be better advised to enter into sincere dialogue with the parties over the exercise of political power than to proceed with its plan to hold elections in six months without assuring the parties' participation.

The parties have been reluctant to collaborate with the military government, fearing to be tarnished by the association. They would prefer to see it eliminated before leaving their comfortable spot in the opposition. But they make a dangerous mistake if they think they will have any chance if the Islamists come to power.

The government has the duty to provide law and order for its citizens, although not through the indiscriminate reprisals it is now conducting. It also has the duty to get food to the cities at affordable prices and provide jobs and housing for its youth.

This two-handed policy requires a similar double policy from the external supporters of a modernising, secular Algeria. Unconditional support of the current government is not sufficient, for it provides no

remedy to the underlying illegitimacy of a tired state that is the basic cause of the Islamists' appeal.

Policies of bed-bugging, of "noninterference" (as recently announced by Paris and Washington), of currying favour with the Islamic Salvation Front or of depicting the inadequacies of both sides are equally fruitless. They weaken the state and favour the advent of an Islamist regime that — like those of Iran and Sudan — has no basis for friendship with the West.

It was, after all, the constant engagement — out of the "noninterference" — of leading world powers over more than four years in the earlier Sant'Egidio process that kept it moving and brought peace to Mozambique.

The international conference proposed by President Francois Mitterrand might be too public a forum — the Algerians are more sensitive in such matters than were the Mozambicans — but it could serve to coordinate Western pressures and to awaken a tighter control over arms flow through Europe to the Islamists.

But if the regime does not encourage efforts to seek out moderates from among the Islamists, separating them from the militant radicals, and broaden its own base of legitimacy within the population, it will follow the same path as the government that faced the previous revolution, in 1962, and be obliged to negotiate only its surrender. The Algerian people, and the Western world, too, will suffer deeply.

The writer, director of the African and Conflict Management programmes at the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University, is currently professor at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. This comment is reprinted from the Herald Tribune.

Indonesia's state creed shifts with the tide

By Lewa Pardoman

Reuter

JAKARTA — Indonesia has long embraced an ideology which for many has become a meaningless mantra, for some a recipe for religious tolerance, and for others an Orwellian monster designed to gobble up the government's opponents.

The influence of Pancasila — literally five principles — stretches from family planning to democracy, from the press to football matches. But increasingly, Indonesians are questioning both the form and substance of the creed.

"The problem with Pancasila is the way it is used nowadays," says noted historian Ong Hokham. "Pancasila is belief in one God, humanity, noity, democracy and social justice — the five noble principles created by the country's founding fathers which are taught at schools and universities and memorised by all Indonesians."

All very worthy, and few would deny Pancasila — 50 years old on June 1 — has played a key role in keeping together a nation spread across several regions and thousands of islands.

To most Indonesians the state ideology, mentioned in the preamble of the constitution and of which it is an inseparable part, is sacred and helps unite the nation.

"Pancasila is innocent to the sense that everybody would agree with its contents except if they are purist," says Mr. Ong. "But since its inception it has come to mean different things to different people — and increasingly, some say, to serve their own interests."

Since wresting power from Sukarno in the late 1960s, President Suharto has developed Pancasila into a political system, portraying it as an alternative to alien Western values.

This is Pancasila democracy (democracy), which effectively allows only three political parties, one of which is clearly favoured by the government, and which is often wielded to bludgeon dissenters into silence.

"Pancasila serves as a vague but exclusive ideology which has been used as a demobilising device against independent political elements seeking to appeal to an international audience," British academic Michael Leifer wrote recently.

Indonesian officials criticise such comments, defending Pancasila democracy as appropriate for a country which has borne the confusing brunt of Western-style democracy, splitting the country during the turbulent 1950s and early 1960s.

"We have tried all kinds of systems. So now we think that we have found our system: Pancasila democracy, which is not perfect and needs to be perfected," Foreign Minister Ali Alatas told foreign journalists recently.

He said Indonesia did not need to change simply because the world was changing. "The world has been changing all the time and we have been trying to follow our course," he said. "Pancasila has had its ups and downs, but it is still the only political system, it was originally framed as a way of keeping religion out of state affairs."

Pancasila was elaborated for the first time by Sukarno, Indonesia's late first president, in a speech in June 1945 before a commission to prepare Indonesia's independence.

But it was only in 1976, some 33 years after the country's independence on August 17, 1945, that the people's consultative assembly declared Pancasila as Indonesia's national philosophy, philosophy and point of view.

Despite pressure from the Muslim majority, Indonesia is not an Islamic state, allowing, in theory at least, freedom of worship and opportunity for its Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and others. But others believe it has gone too far.

Pers Pancasila, or Pancasila press, seeks to dictate what subjects journalists should cover, and indirectly urges them to shun sensitive political issues.

A nation-wide campaign, in the form of compulsory courses, known as P4, briefs participants — from officials, employees to students — on Pancasila's five principles.

With their usual wry humour, Indonesians who attend such courses, often describe the programme as ceremonial, dubbing the acronym as "pergi pagung petang" — leave early in the morning for the lectures and go home late in the afternoon.

Many, less wryly, see it as pure indoctrination. Outspoken legislator Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) says an effort to elaborate the meaning of Pancasila beyond the simple creed written in the articles in the constitution was a violation of Pancasila.

By Cathy King

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Umm Qais, the Greco-Roman town formerly known as Gadara, is the focal point of a theatre group testing the waters of theatre in education (TIE).

Under the co-directorship of Nur Al-Husseini Foundation's (NHF) TIE programme director Lina Al-Tal, Bataynah and TIE specialist Geoff Gillham, the group will assemble a production directed at students that is intended to encourage their participation.

TIE allows for direct participation in the learning process. It combines a student's cognitive ability with sensitivities and action, said Mr. Gillham, who is by profession a playwright and a director. "We learn through experience and so the objective of TIE is to use a pupil's feelings in conjunction with thinking and action," he said during a recent workshop, adding that traditional classroom education is unnatural since it depends wholly upon the cognitive and passive absorption of information.

"Our first TIE production was performed in 1990. It was a play called Time Impressions written by Walid Saif. With it we toured the Kingdom and gained useful experience."

By Nancy Benac

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Let it not be said that President Bill Clinton doesn't do his darndest to show his outgoing guests a good time.

The White House beelied up its health-conscious menu to accommodate the renowned appetite of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl recently at a big White House dinner.

And last time Mr. Kohl visited, Mr. Clinton topped across town to have lunch at the German leader's favourite Italian restaurant, matching him with epic proportions. Mr. Clinton joked that Kohl was so at home

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. says Iran island defences pose risk

WASHINGTON (R) — Iran has moved sophisticated air defence onto disputed islands in the Gulf that pose a risk of an accidental confrontation with American ships, a U.S. general said on Tuesday. "They have moved more sophisticated air defence capabilities on those islands," General Binford Peay, commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The danger I worry about is the accidental problem that you may have as our forces transit the Gulf waters and have an incident take place that... involves some kind of escalation," he said. "It is a concern," he said. "I think it is characteristic of the entire Iranian challenge that we now have in the Gulf." He did not say how recently the air defences had been moved to the islands. The islands are near the Straits of Hormuz entrance to the Gulf and are involved in a territorial dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Iran reiterated its claim to the islands, Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs, last week but rejected a statement by eight Arab countries that it was refusing to negotiate the dispute with the UAE.

Egyptian lawyers join plans for strike

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian lawyers have joined plans for a one-day strike on Thursday in protest at a new law on union elections, a spokesman said on Wednesday. The lawyers association, which is dominated by Islamists, has told its members to boycott court hearings for the day, though they may continue work in their offices, he said. One other professional union, for engineers, has called a token two-hour strike for Thursday and other unions say they may join in on Thursday or on other days. The protest is against amendments to the union elections law, approved by parliament on Sunday. The amendments put the elections under the control of the judiciary and give judges the right to appoint "administrative committees" to supervise the voting.

70 firms vying for Beirut port contract

BEIRUT (AFP) — Some 70 Asian, European and Lebanese firms are vying to secure a \$30-million contract to rehabilitate the port of Beirut which was ravaged during the 1975-1990 civil war, port administration officials said Wednesday. Firms from South Korea, Britain, France, Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are among those preselected following an offer for tenders. Most have already set up joint ventures, with Lebanese companies, the officials said. The firms or consortiums are competing for the construction of breakwaters, docks, workshops and a 12-megawatt power station, as well as road resurfacing and sewer repair projects. Port administration officials were expected to announce which firm would secure the contract within 40 days. Earlier this month firms were also invited to offer tenders to dredge the docks at Beirut port. The cost of the contract was not revealed. The British firm Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick inspected the docks at a cost of \$269,500.

Hitler's book being published in Hebrew

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Hebrew translation of Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf" will be published in the coming days, a daily reported Wednesday. Translator Dan Yaron, a Holocaust survivor and retired teacher, told the Maariv newspaper that the book was an important historic document. The 650 page translation, entitled "My Struggle," is being published by Academic Publishers of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Austrian-born Yaron began translating the book in the late 1980s and several chapters were published separately in 1992 by Moshe Zimmermann, a German history professor at the university. Neither Mr. Yaron nor Mr. Zimmermann could be reached Wednesday.

Qatari ship to carry sugar for Iraq

DOHA (R) — A Qatari ship will sail to Iraq Thursday to deliver 2,500 tonnes of sugar, the first donation from a Gulf Arab country to the beleaguered Iraq since the 1990 Kuwait crisis. The ship, named Zarka and owned by Qatar Navigation, was ready at the Doha port with its cargo on Wednesday, said Hamad Al Hitmi, head of the shipping company's marine transport section. He told the Associated Press that the Zarka would dock at Umm Al Qasr port in southern Iraq after sailing up the Gulf for two and one-half days. Last week, Qatar announced it was sending the sugar as "contribution to easing the humanitarian suffering faced by the Iraqi nation."

Satellite ban in Iran gets final approval

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities are set to remove tens of thousands of satellite dishes in the country after a parliamentary ban on the equipment received final approval on Wednesday. The Council of Guardians, which seeks to ensure laws conform to Islamic principles and the constitution, approved the law which was passed on Jan. 1 and seeks to prevent Iranians from watching foreign television programmes. The ban gives satellite users one month to take down their dishes and related equipment or face legal action. Tens of thousands of satellite dishes have sprung up on rooftops in Tehran and other major cities, allowing many Iranians to watch foreign television broadcasts and prompting Islamic conservatives and hardliners to push for a ban.

UAE arrests 164 Asian illegal immigrants

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) arrested 164 Pakistanis and other Asians who tried to enter the country illegally over the past two weeks, newspapers reported here on Wednesday. Border and coast guards called in the air force when they carried out raids in the mountains in Diba and towns in the eastern region near the border with Oman, the papers said. Coast guard sources said those arrested included Pakistanis, Afghans and Iranians. They came by sea seeking jobs in the oil-rich Gulf country. Police records showed more than 25,000 people, mostly Asians, had been arrested over the past two decades while trying to enter the UAE illegally.

Couple who had sex in party to be caned

DUBAI (R) — An unmarried couple will be caned in the United Arab Emirates for having sex at a party, the Gulf News daily reported on Wednesday. A maid who threw the party at her employer's house without his knowledge was sentenced to three months in prison, the newspaper said. A Sharia (Islamic law) court in the UAE state of Sharjah found the couple "guilty of sex outside marriage." It sentenced the man to 90 strokes of cane and three months in jail to be followed by deportation, the daily said. His lover was sentenced to 100 strokes and two months in jail after confessing to the charges, it added. Three other guests received one-month jail sentences. The paper did not give the nationality of the convicted party-goers.

Polish carrier to resume Lebanon flights

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Polish national carrier LOT will resume flights to Lebanon next month becoming the 27th foreign airline to return to Beirut international airport since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. A local travel agent representing LOT told AFP on Wednesday that the airline will start a weekly flight on Mondays between Warsaw and Beirut starting March 27. Foreign airlines have been returning steadily in Beirut's international airport, which was shut down several times during Lebanon's 15-year-war. Their return coincides with plans by the authorities for a \$500-million expansion of the airport.

Prince Hassan hosts iftar

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday hosted an iftar in honour of commissioned officers and soldiers of the Prince Hassan Battalion.

Prince Hassan said he was happy to meet with the Armed Forces personnel, especially after Jordan regained its land occupied by Israel.

Prince Hassan, who performed Al Maghreb prayers with the guests, was accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Rashid Ben Al Hassan, the chief of staff of the royal land forces, the commander of the 12th Royal Mechanised Division and senior army officers.

Earlier Wednesday, Prince Hassan toured lands restored to Jordanian sovereignty in Al Baqura area (Petra photo)



'Republicans owe victory to conservative tide'

(Continued from page 12)

cuts to the middle class, a change in Mr. Clinton's previously passed crime laws and congressional term limits.

"The contract gave the campaign a theme and coherence. This was a key item for Republicans," she said. "Essentially, it rolls back 60 years of government in saying no to automatic (welfare) entitlements and shipping the money to the states, in effect, dismantling the 'welfare state'."

And, she added, Republicans have tagged the president with variety of nasty labels.

"On deficit reduction, the Republicans labelled him as a tax and spend president," she said. (Mr. Clinton has been one of few presidents to directly call for an increase in taxes to battle the deficit) "And on health care, they painted

him and Hillary as 'big government and big spenders'."

All this added to the fact that some people "just don't like Bill," she said. Since his campaign, Mr. Clinton has had to fight allegations of infidelity, fend off criticism of an Arkansas real estate investment gone bad, defend his wife's questionable investment in cattle futures and most recently address allegations of sexual harassment during his governorship in Arkansas. "He has never completely shed his 'Slick Willie' title," Ms. Drew said. "And his ability to shade the truth has really turned people off."

Can the Republicans manage affairs any better? The contract has already been introduced to a welfare proposal has started as well as a rewrite of the crime bill.

"The welfare proposal

has some draconian propositions (which include barring unwed mothers under age 18 from receiving welfare)," she said. "But I think they will succeed in shifting the terms of understanding about what welfare should be."

The crime bill is moving more towards punishment than prevention, Ms. Drew said, with the aim of the actions being to give prisoners fewer opportunities to appeal, and make search and seizure easier, designing "a radical overhaul of the government role in crime."

But she said, the Republicans have to keep moving things forward and quickly, since Americans are nearly out of patience with their politicians. "If they don't accomplish enough, the public will become angry and cynical," she said.

The Republican victory came at a critical time for U.S. politics — 1996 elec-

tions are just around the corner. Ms. Drew said there is a possibility that Mr. Clinton, who has already stated his intentions to run for a second term, may face a Democratic challenger in the primaries.

"We don't know yet," she said. "Gephardt, Bill Bradley, Bob Kerry — they won't decide until later."

If Mr. Clinton runs, she said, there will have to be a third party to give him a chance. "If it wasn't for Perot in 1992, (Clinton) may not have made it," she pointed out. "He only had a 43 per cent plurality (electoral vote)."

In addition, she said, Mr. Clinton will have to find a way to "energise" the traditional liberal Democrats who suffered a huge "psychological blow" following the congressional elections. This will be difficult, she said, as Mr. Clinton is meanwhile moving to the centre of the political spectrum.

Arabs split over treaty

(Continued from page 1)

he told AFP. "They apparently did not like an opinion piece written kind of totalitarian megalomaniac by a former ambassador to the United Nations and could not be couched in a more courteous way."

The former envoy, Yehuda Blum, wrote in Monday's edition of the newspaper that Foreign Minister Amr Musa and his predecessor Esmat Abdul Meguid were "sceptics, if not outright opponents, of the Israel-Egypt peace process."

He said that they and Osama Al Baz, an adviser to President Hosni Mubarak, were termed "rejectionists" by their own colleagues.

"As long as Musa and Al Baz occupy centre stage in Egyptian foreign policy, this must serve to indicate a continuing course of containing Israel and 'reducing it to its natural size'," Mr. Blum said.

The ban came amid the war of words between the two countries over Israel's refusal to join the NPT.

Chechenya

(Continued from page 1)

Ingushetia's Interior Ministry. "And the army is the army — it's like a cat that's in motion and it's not going to stop."

But members of the Chechen presidential guard said Mr. Dudayev controlled all fighters and any agreement would be honoured by all.

More talks would be held on Friday, ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Chechen commander Basayev as saying.

Interfax news agency said agreement had been reached separately to hand over dead and wounded from the two-month conflict in the north Caucasus territory in which hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, have been killed.

It said the more difficult question of exchanging prisoners had yet to be addressed.

For Mr. Yeltsin, the ceasefire — which extended a temporary partial truce that covered only heavy weapons — improved the backdrop for his state-of-the-nation address to parliament on Thursday.



Palestinian youths throw stones at Israeli soldiers during clashes in Hebron refugee camp of Al Fawwar on Wednesday

Israel: Pullout possible in May

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinian territories to a halt to Jewish settlement and a timetable for military redeployment on the West Bank and elections to an autonomy

council. PLO senior negotiator Hassan Asfour also explained that the Palestinians would accept a gradual pull back, providing it took place according to an agreed timetable.

able and was completed before elections. "Arafat and Rabin will discuss this point tomorrow," he said. "They will also discuss all the Israeli measures against the Palestinians."

Clashes in Hebron

(Continued from page 1)

of them to clear the area of debris.

On Tuesday Israeli soldiers shot dead a 16-year-old Palestinian and wounded seven people during clashes near Hebron.

A leader of the outlawed Kach movement evaded house arrest Wednesday to pray at the grave of Goldstein.

"I am not afraid of the police," Baruch Marzel told AFP after visiting the grave of the man he calls "holy."

Hardline settlers have turned the grave at Kiyat Arba into a site of pilgrimage and put up a stone monument.

It is about five kilometres from the centre of Hebron, where Mr. Marzel lives. He had to go through at least three army posts to reach the settlement.

"I went with some other people who are also under house arrest," he boasted, but refused to give their names.

Extremist settlers are due to hold a memorial service in Kiyat Arba, where Goldstein lived, on Thursday.



A Palestinian mother tries to save her boy from being arrested by an Israeli soldier suspected of throwing stones during clashes in Hebron (AFP photo)

'Jordan will pursue quest'

(Continued from page 1)

ated commitment to democracy and respect of the law in the country.

But the King said he feared for "democracy from those who profess to be democrats."

Responding to a question, the King said that a visit by a number of opposition parties to Syria late last month is being looked into to see if it violated the law.

During their visit, the leaders of the eight leftist and pan-Arabist parties criticised Jordan for signing the peace treaty with Israel and praised the Syrian position as the only strong one against Israel plans to dominate the region.

The visit was severely criticised by mainstream Jordanian politicians and observers who accused the parties of playing into the hands of a foreign regime.

Responding to a question on the modernisation of the armed forces, the King said it is urgent to modernise the army in order to deter threats, "physical or indirect," that may face the country, protect its commitments and counter terrorism, as well as participating in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

The Kingdom "will always have a regional role to play," King Hussein told reporters.

His Majesty reiterated his concern over the plight of the Iraqi people saying that the "government, notwithstanding our feelings are for the Iraqi people."

But the King said Jordan, which never supported the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and sought to solve the conflict through ending the occupation, has not been able to influence Iraq.

The King said that Jordan was not involved in any Israeli-Iraqi talks "if" the two countries were indeed in contact.

Expressing hope that Jordan's democratic march can be a positive influence in the region, King Hussein reiterated.

The King said that Jerusalem's holy shrines should not be part of political sovereignty and must be "given a status above all that."

"This is the only approach that can work," the King said.

Expressing hope that Jordan's democratic march can be a positive influence in the region, King Hussein reiterated.

Experts see Saudi-Yemeni clash

(Continued from page 1)

of difference," he said. Sheikh Ahmad's remarks in Riyadh contradicted a statement Tuesday by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, indicating that the negotiations have bogged down.

Mr. Saleh stressed that Yemen "would not fight" the Saudis. But "we will not accept more seizures of Yemeni lands," he added.

Mr. Saleh complained that "the Saudis refuse arbitration even though it is specified in the Taif agreement." "For us, it is either God's justice or arbitration."

The acceptable solution, he said, was one that would be "comprehensive" and im-

plement the articles of the agreement that allows Yemenis privileged entry into the kingdom.

Yemen also rejected the "divisive" approach that the Saudis are pursuing, distinguishing between borders that existed between the kingdom and the former North-Yemen and those with the former South-Yemen, he said.

The two Yemens merged in May 1990. The Taif agreement, which ended a border war, was signed only with the former North Yemen.

The border issue has flared periodically and in recent years, relations between Sanaa and Riyadh have deteriorated. The latest eruptions along the border occurred last December, with several armed clashes.

Ramadan turns Cairo into feast for senses

CAIRO (AFP) — Cairo's extremes are never more apparent than during the Holy Month of Ramadan, with the rich feasting on the atmosphere of teeming streets while the poor enjoy dishes they normally only dream of tasting.

In a hotel in the select Zamalek district a Coptic Christian businessman has staged for his Muslim friends a mock-up of a Cairo alleyway, minus the dust and pollution, as the setting for supper, the last meal before sunrise.

Hassanallah, a popular brass band formed at the turn of the century, guests women clad in miniskirts and men in smart suits, who walk through a cardboard cityscape depicting a market and dilapidated houses.

The scene also features traditional musharabiyeh — decorative wooden lattices through which women can see the street while remaining hidden from view.

An extra slice of realism is provided by a street seller hawking sweet potatoes, his six-year-old daughter pushing a barrow, a seller of jasmine necklaces and another offering koshary, a popular dish consisting of rice, lentils, macaroni and onions.

They all watch the pageant with awe, transported from the bustling streets for a few hours.

Tables groan with smoked salmon and glazed chestnuts from famous Parisian caterers alongside traditional Egyptian dishes, while women dressed in flowing jellabehs serve dried fruit and sweets.

Hoda Onsy, a businesswoman's wife, describes the lavish Ramadan feast as a "royal party."

The only thing missing was champagne — but you know, it is Ramadan.

She denies that such extravagance is wasteful.

"When you have money you have to keep up a certain standard and do what people expect from you. You cannot invite the wealthiest people in Cairo and give them a 'foul' (bean) sandwich and say 'that's it'."

The guests are seated on cushions so as not to detract from the decor. Instead of alcohol they are offered herbal teas flavoured with hibiscus and cinnamon, and instead of cigars they smoke bubble-bubble pipes.

Famous singers take their turns on the stage while belly dancers wearing skimpy skirts perform on the dance floor and tables.

One of the dancers, carried away by the rhythm, takes off her black scarf and wraps it round her swaying hips provocatively.

Meanwhile, in the working class Al Hussein quarter the poor enjoy the illusion or prosperity at sundown, regaled with fare courtesy of Cairo's wealthier citizens.

The charity tables set out in front of the main mosque offer soup, rice and meat — a luxury many can never afford.

Hussein Abdul Ati, a taxi driver, says he would rather be with his family, "but I sometimes bring them here to eat meat."

Seated under multicoloured canopies, the "damned of the earth" and even minor government employees savour honey cakes and other delicacies.

Singers from the provinces cheer them up with traditional or religious songs while the billowing skirts of whirling dervishes provide a feast for the eye.

Ahmed Eid, a road sweeper, says his favourite charity tables are the ones in Al Hussein Street.

UAE non-oil sector peaks in 1994 Middle East's 'Hong Kong' expects record trade in '95

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP) — The Gulf emirate of Dubai, dubbed the Hong Kong of the Middle East, expects its non-oil trade to hit a record in 1995 due to a business upturn in the Gulf.

Trade is projected to rise by 10.5 per cent to 80.37 billion dirhams (\$21.89 billion) this year from 72.73 billion dirhams (\$19.81 billion) in 1994, the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry said Tuesday.

Imports will grow by 11 per cent to 64.24 billion dirhams (\$17.50 billion) from 57.39 billion dirhams (\$15.77 billion) and exports by 10 per cent to 4.37 billion dirhams (\$1.19 billion) from 3.97 billion dirhams (\$1.08 billion), the chamber said in a study.

Reexports are forecast to increase by 8.2 per cent to 11.75 billion dirhams (\$3.20 billion) from 10.86 billion dirhams (\$2.95 billion).

"This year will be a record year for trade due to an economic upturn in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Gulf countries," a chamber official told AFP.

"Another factor is the opening of new markets for our exports and reexports, including East Europe and former Soviet Union."

Dubai is the main transshipment centre in the region, handling more than one fifth of the non-oil trade of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE.

The emirate, the second biggest member of the UAE, has used its oil wealth to develop its ports to face growing business. Its Rashid and Jebel Ali ports now rank among the biggest 15 harbours in the world.

Its free trade zone of Jebel Ali is also the largest in the region, with more than 700 companies, investing over \$1 billion.

Hundreds of thousands of people from Russia and other communist nations pour into the emirate every year to buy electronics, among the cheapest in the Middle East given its low customs tariffs.

Around 25 per cent of Dubai's reexports go to neighbouring Iran while the rest cover the markets of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Thailand and other countries.

Official reports have shown that the UAE non-oil sector surged to its highest level in 1994 as the Gulf OPEC producer pressed ahead with attempts to diversify its economy and cushion the impact of unpredictable crude prices.

The gross domestic product (GDP) in the non-oil sector peaked at \$8.4 billion dirhams (\$2.34 billion) in 1994 accounting for 66.2 per cent of the total GDP.

This compared with \$3.7 billion dirhams (\$1.0 billion) in 1993, a growth of 5.6 per cent, according to the figures by the planning ministry and the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank.

"The non-oil sector has steadily grown over the past decade due to efforts to diversify the economy," the bank said in a study.

Although crude exports still provide the bulk of the UAE's national income, the figures showed the non-oil sector has become immune to crude price fluctuations as a steady expansion caused by intensive investment enabled several sectors to sustain growth without reliance on government spending.

The focus has been on the industrial sector because of the limited farm and tourism potential of the arid desert country.

A breakdown showed non-oil industries, mostly cement, chemicals, food, clothes and other light products, had steadily grown since 1984, with their GDP hitting a record 12 billion dirhams (\$3.26 billion) in 1994.

The UAE and other Gulf states launched an industrialisation drive to offset large losses from weak prices that have plummeted to nearly half their 1980 level.

This, coupled with lower output by Saudi Arabia, slashed their oil earnings to

Santer to stick to single EU currency timetable

STRASBOURG, France (R) — European Commission President Jacques Santer pledged Wednesday to stick to the timetable for creating a single EU currency and sidestepped a row with British Euro-sceptics over border controls.

In a speech outlining the commission's work plans for 1995, Mr. Santer told the European Parliament his priorities would include fighting fraud in the 15-nation bloc, boosting industrial competitiveness and work on information technologies.

He said the commission would work to complete the EU's single market, but made no direct reference to lifting the union's internal border controls, a subject which has inflamed the row over Europe among Britain's ruling Conservative Party.

The detailed work plan presented to Euro-MPS committees the commission to work for a law to remove passport checks at internal borders.

British Prime Minister John Major vowed Tuesday to veto any such move when it is eventually brought before member states for approval.

Britain jealously guards its rights to check passports at its borders, partly to monitor immigration. Most of the other EU states are in the process of abandoning passport controls for movement within the bloc.

Mr. Santer's remarks on a single currency, simply committing himself to follow existing rules, could also fuel the arguments in London, where Conservative Party infighting over Europe is taking its toll on the British pound.

"The timetable has been agreed," Mr. Santer said referring to the move towards a single currency. "I am simply asking that we stick to it."

He said the commission would bolster efforts for the union to make the most of opportunities in information technologies and audiovisual fields, a source of jobs for Europe.

"It is essential that Europe carve out a place for itself at the forefront of these markets to ensure competitive jobs today and new jobs tomorrow," Mr. Santer said.

The subject will be tackled during a Brussels conference of the Group of Seven most industrialised countries on Feb. 24 to 26.

Mr. Santer pledged further work on creating road and rail networks across western Europe, saying the projects would bring fresh life and trade to regions.

"They must be built. I can only advise those who doubt the value of such projects to note the enthusiasm of those

who have already had occasion to use the Channel Tunnel," he said.

He urged EU countries to complete rules for the EU's market for electricity and gas or face commission action.

"We should complete the internal markets in electricity and natural gas this year. If we find that the council (of ministers) has made no progress, the commission will have to take matters into its own hands," Mr. Santer said.

He said the union must develop a "genuine employment policy" something which could be achieved by improving industrial competitiveness through research and by promoting quality.

On external relations he referred to what he said was a desire among the EU's partners for closer trade links.

"We must take advantage of this reality, but to do so we first need a common foreign and security policy that is worthy of the name and actually works," he said.

Arabs hit by high food deficit despite farming potential

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states have a deficit of about \$10 billion a year in their farming trade although arable land is more than enough to make them self-sufficient, official reports said Wednesday.

The food gap in the Arab League's 22 members, the difference between their farm imports and exports, accumulated to nearly \$88 billion between 1985 and 1993, according to the reports by the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

The deficit peaked to a 10-year high of \$13.1 billion in 1988 before it eased to around \$8.6 billion in 1991 and \$9.5 billion in 1993.

It covered most farm products but cereal and meat suffered more. The cumulative deficit in cereal stood at around \$42 billion and meat at nearly \$12.5 billion.

The other products affected included vegetables and fruit, dairy products, sugar, tea and coffee.

Fish was the only product to have recorded a surplus of around \$4.14 billion during the same period, according to the figures.

The Arab food gap has persisted for most years since the 1960s due to improper government policies, failure to exploit arable land, lack of incentives and investment, poor infrastructure and irrigation problems.

The region's arable land is estimated at around 198 million hectares (490 million acres) but less than one third is exploited, the AOAD study said.

"Development of the agricultural sector in the Arab World is facing economic, natural and financial obstacles," it said. "They include primitive irrigation and farming methods, poor infrastructure, imbalances in regional markets, lack of farm incentives and investments, and government interference by imposing taxes or fixing prices."

It said nearly 80 per cent of the cultivated Arab land depended on rainfall and the rest on irrigation. But it added irrigation was inefficient in most Arab countries due to lack of technology.

"Around 12,000 cubic metres (420,000 cubic feet) of water are used in the irrigation of one hectare (2.5 acres) while only 7,500 (262,500 cubic feet) are actually needed."

It said Arab farm output grew by only 0.6 per cent in 1993 compared with 1992 while the agricultural sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) increased to \$71.8 billion from \$67.3 billion.

A breakdown showed such a contribution exceeded 15 per cent in such fertile countries as Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria and Morocco, while it was as low as two to six per cent in the oil-rich Gulf, which is mostly desert.

Arab officials have repeatedly voiced concern over the widening food gap, saying it carried economic and political hazards as a large part of their agricultural imports come from the West.

"Gulf states have the funds for farm investment in fertile member states but they appear reluctant to do so for political reasons," one expert said.

AOAD figures showed Arab cereal production slightly declined to 41.49 million tonnes in 1993 from 42.22 million tonnes in 1992.

Wheat output fell to 18.27 million tonnes from 19 million tonnes while rice dropped to 4.06 million tonnes from 4.14 million tonnes and barley to 6.58 million tonnes from 6.68 million tonnes.

Most other products also declined except meat, dairy, fish and oil.

By the end of 1993, the Arab World had 40.2 million cows, 120.7 million sheep, 58.7 million goats and 10.4 million camels, the figures showed.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY FEBRUARY 16, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You are able to get the support you need for important projects from good friends who have the means. Then get busy later on at those tasks ahead of you and complete them quickly.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Contact individuals who will help you make your property more valuable and comfortable. See how to add to present income appreciably in an ethical fashion. Spend tonight with friends.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Talking over some problems with a person who thinks differently from you this morning will help you solve them quickly. Kin help you with some task that is most boring for you.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you waste too much time worrying about a problem this morning, you are not going to accomplish very much, so toss it aside for now. Tomorrow the right solution comes to you.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Talk over that new project with a friend and then see about getting the financial backing you need for it this evening. Forget social life, since little or nothing would come of it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study that public problem well before you try to handle it today. Show that you are not a superficial person. Others are depending on you to get the work done well and without fail.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have inspired ideas about how to put new life into old projects that will make them successful instead of discouraging failures. Information from one overseas can be helpful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Plans must be well worked out today if you want to handle responsibilities satisfactorily. Don't rely on advisors since they are busy. Come to your own conclusions.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Pay attention to the ideas of an associate and do not look to big wig to do more for you. Spend this evening with people who have the same mind set as you and can lend a hand.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is an ideal day to attend to tasks that only you can handle properly and do so in a clever and ingenious way, expressing some particular talent that you have is also good.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A romantic interest has some rather strange ideas today, so smile them away and do not break up the relationship. Tomorrow they will most likely be forgotten.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You had better cooperate with what family has in mind or you can certainly be the loser as well as they. Ridding yourself of the cause of tensions at home would be wise this evening.

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY FEBRUARY 17, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Good day to enjoy recreation with people you like. Put that skill to work also that is exclusively yours. Try not to get to bed too late this evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Doing whatever will please family the most such as buying little gifts that show your thoughtfulness is wise in the morning.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Ideal day for that little trip you have long wanted to take or for working on mechanical things that will appeal to you.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Concentrate on how to add to present security in an ethical and clever way. Be active this afternoon and this evening, listen to what an expert has to suggest.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You are clever and magnetic today and can accomplish much through the traits. So get busy contacting key people. Entertaining or being entertained is favourable.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have some plans that can be put in motion easily in the coming days. Talk over the principles of same with those you want to work along with you.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get out of the regular rut and enjoy the company of good friends you like. Repay some social obligations you may have and show your generosity of spirit.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Contact the big wig early who can assist you with some worthy affairs that mean much to you. Put credit matters behind you with clarity and efficiency.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a great day to get out to new scenes and personalities that can be helpful to you. Contact persons who can make your advancement easier.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Use your intuition and clear up those problems you have in a most astute fashion. Make sure you do not burn one who is a friend.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Sit down early with associates and decide on future actions which will lead to greater success. Being more tactful will rid you of any opposition you may have.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Good day for getting much of that accumulated task completed and out of the way early. Adding efforts to home is important. Plan how to have more leisure in the future.

British inflation jumps as recovery loses pace

LONDON (R) — British inflation rose sharply in January to 3.3 per cent, sparking concern that interest rates will have to rise again.

Unemployment fell to a three-year low in the same month but consumer confidence still looked shaken as retail sales dropped by an unexpectedly large 0.9 per cent, according to official statistics released Wednesday.

Sterling, already badly rattled this week by divisions over Europe in Prime Minister John Major's government, continued to slide against the mark and the stock market softened.

Britain's pound slipped about half a penny to 2.3538 marks on the news, and the London stock market's key FTSE 100 index shed six points.

The annual rate of retail price increases jumped in January to 3.3 per cent from 2.9 in December. The underlying rate of inflation, which strips out the cost of home loans, also rose strongly, hitting 2.8 per cent after December's 2.5.

Market analysts fear another interest rate rise could be needed to quell inflation. British interest rates, last raised in early February, are currently at 6.75 per cent.

The treasury, reacting to a raft of statistics that gave the month's most detailed snapshot on the state of the economy, insisted that the recovery looked healthy and sustainable.

"There is still a good deal of spare capacity in this economy," Employment Secretary Michael Portillo said after the figures were released.

Unemployment has fallen every month for the past year, dropping to a three-year low. The total was cut by 27,500 in January to 8.9 per cent of the workforce.

Consumer confidence still looked fragile despite Britain's steady recovery from its most crippling recession in 50 years — retail sales volumes fell by 0.9 per cent in January after a 0.5 increase in December.

Other average earnings in-

creased by 3.75 per cent in the year to December, the same as November.

The figures were released the day after the British currency hit its lowest level against the mark for two years.

The constant wrangling in Britain's divided Conservative government has unnerved financial markets which fear Mr. Major could be toppled by the opposition Labour Party at the next general election, due by May 1997.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



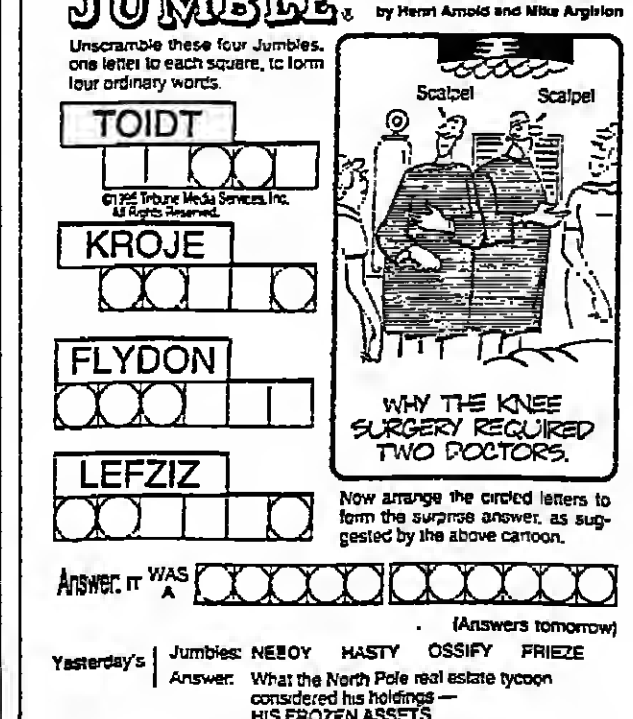
Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword by Roger Jurgovan



Business & Finance

Investments climb to JD 408m in 1994

Statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Trade show that 1,462 companies with a total capital of JD 408 million were registered at the ministry last year compared to 1,409 companies capitalised at JD 350 million in 1993. Publicly traded companies topped the list in 1994 with 25 per cent of the total capital of JD 408 million. Statistics released at the ministry last year showed that the highest investment in the trading sector was in the banking sector with 81 companies capitalised at JD 12.55 million. The highest investment in the trading sector was in the banking sector with 81 companies capitalised at JD 12.55 million. The highest investment in the trading sector was in the banking sector with 81 companies capitalised at JD 12.55 million.

Marka Airport will be put on regular service again

Marka Airline will be put on regular service again starting June 1995. The old airport will serve Royal Jordanian planes on regional flights. According to an official, two small aircraft will initially cover the route. Marka Airline will be put on regular service again starting June 1995. The old airport will serve Royal Jordanian planes on regional flights. According to an official, two small aircraft will initially cover the route. Marka Airline will be put on regular service again starting June 1995. The old airport will serve Royal Jordanian planes on regional flights. According to an official, two small aircraft will initially cover the route.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health has announced a list of new drugs for imported drugs. The average drop in prices was nine per cent, the same as in the first list. Prices for drugs while an increase in Sweden and Britain. Prices of Italian drugs remained stable as they were paid for in U.S. dollars.

The Arab Maritime

The Arab Maritime Company transported more than eight million passengers and carried more than 30,000 tonnes of goods last year. The company reported a record profit of more than 100 million Jordanian dinars. The company reported a record profit of more than 100 million Jordanian dinars.

develop a "genuine employment policy," something which could be achieved by improving industrial competitiveness through research and development.

On external relations, he referred to what he said was the desire among the EU's members for closer trade links.

"We must take advantage of this reality, but to do so, we first need a common foreign and security policy that is actually works," he said.

SCOPE

SDAY FEBRUARY 16, 1995

209: Carroll Righter Foundation

You are able to get the support of good friends who have the necessary tasks ahead of you and complete

Contact individuals who will help you in a comfortable and safe way, and in an ethical fashion. Speed

Talking over some problems with a friend or family member can help you to see things from a different perspective. You may find that you have some common ground with them, and that you can help each other.

July 21: If you waste too much time in the morning, you are not going to get anything done today. Tomorrow the right

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business daily beat

Investments climb to JD 408m in 1994

Statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Trade show that 4,462 companies with a total capital of JD 408.37 million were registered at the ministry last year compared to 4,409 companies capitalised at JD 342.99 million in 1993. Public shareholding companies topped the list in 1994 with 25 companies capitalised at JD 281.20 million. Statistics revealed high weakness in agricultural investment as only seven companies with a JD 81,000 capital were registered. The highest investment was in the trading sector with 851 companies capitalised at JD 12.55 million followed by industrial investment with 469 firms (JD 12.34 million capital). The statistics did not specify foreign investment in the Kingdom nor did it specify the number of companies which ceased to exist (Al Aswaq).

The Municipality of Greater Amman (MGA) has finished a new study to build a bridge for cars coming from the area of the Ministry of Interior's old premises towards Abdali. Work on the bridge, which is expected to cost JD 1.5 million and take eight months to complete, will begin in early June, 1995. MGA will also open a new road from Al Qaisiyah and Wadi Abdoun area to link with Queen Zein Street, near the American Embassy, and stretch up to the industrial area of Wadi Al Seer to ease the traffic on Zahran Street which stretches from the First Circle to the Eighth Circle. The bridge under construction now near the Seventh Circle will be ready before Eid Al Fitr. Studies on a tunnel that will be built under Jabal Al Qalaa, are near completion and a tender will be issued for the project which is expected to begin in early summer and end within a year (Al Ra'i).

Marka Airport will be put into regular service again starting June 1995. The old airport will serve Royal Jordanian planes on regional short flights. According to an airline official, two small aircraft with turbine engines each able to carry 50 passengers, will initially cover Aqaba, Sharm Al Sheikh and Alexandria and sometimes Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Larnaca (Al Ra'i).

Sources at the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment expect the municipalities to receive a total revenue of JD 20 million this year from various fees. The number of municipalities has increased to 259 in 1995 from 174 in 1994 as 85 village councils have been elevated to municipalities (Al Ra'i).

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Communications Minister Abdul Hafiz Al Asbhab said the PNA would give priority to Jordanian companies and engineers to participate in planning, studying and providing experience to Palestinian projects (Al Ra'i).

The Ministry of Health issued the second list of new prices for imported drugs. The average drop in prices was nine per cent, the same percentage as in the first list issued last week. Prices were reduced on Swedish and British drugs while an increase in prices affected drugs from Switzerland, Germany and France. Prices of Italian drugs remained stable as they are paid for in U.S. dollars (Al Aswaq).

The Arab Maritime Bridge Company transported more than eight million passengers and carried more than 30,000 tonnes of goods between Jordan and Egypt last year. The company reportedly made large profits that exceeded even its capital which was not disclosed (Al Aswaq).

British Petroleum profits surge in '94

LONDON (R) — The British Petroleum (B.P.) Co. Plc has said its replacement-cost net income soared by nearly 70 per cent to £1.52 billion (\$2.38 billion) in 1994, helped by sharply lower costs and strong profits from chemicals.

The oil major, Britain's third largest company by capitalisation, raised its quarterly dividend by 20 per cent to three pence.

B.P. said lower operating and finance costs, an improved sales mix and higher chemicals margins towards the year end more than offset an eight per cent fall in oil prices over the year and a 21 per cent decline in worldwide oil refining margins.

Replacement-cost profit before exceptional items rose by 32 per cent for the year to £1.48 billion (\$2.32 billion). Replacement-cost net profit in the fourth quarter rose to £411 million (\$642.8 million) from £54 million (\$84.5 million) a year earlier as strong chemicals and improved exploration and production outweighed falls in refining margins.

On a historical-cost basis, which includes gains or losses on the value of oil stocks, earnings for the year were £1.58 billion (\$2.47 billion), up from £615 million (\$961.8 million).

B.P. said the results confirmed its achievement ahead of plan of targets set in 1992 to cut debt by \$1 billion a year, limit capital expenditure to less than \$5 billion and increase replacement cost profit before exceptional items to \$2 billion.

Strong operating cash flow allowed debt repayment of £1.27 billion (\$1.94 billion) in the year after settlement of a tax dispute with the state of Alaska.

Nomura Securities suffers \$202m loss

TOKYO (AP) — Nomura Securities Co., Japan's largest brokerage house, has said its corporate group suffered a pretax loss of 20 billion yen (\$202 million) in the first 10 months of fiscal 1994.

If Nomura's companies fail to rebound in the final two months of the fiscal year, it will post its first-ever consolidated loss.

Slumping business on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, poor performance by its subsidiaries, sluggish equity finances in Europe and low bond yields resulting from rising interest rates in the United States were to blame, Nomura said.

In September last year, Nomura projected a full-year group profit of 70 billion yen (\$707 million) for the current fiscal year ending March 31. The year began on a hopeful note, with the stock market moving higher during the first six months of calendar 1994, Nomura noted. But the market slumped thereafter.

Average daily transactions on the Tokyo Stock Exchange slumped from 350 billion yen (\$3.54 billion) for the six months ended Sept. 30, to 280 billion yen (\$2.83 billion) in the four following months.

The weak stock market made conversions of bond issues into stock unattractive, leading to a fall in revenues from that business as well, Nomura said.

Investment trust business also suffered, also leading to a falloff in commission income, it said.

Despite slumping business, in 1993 Nomura chalked up a consolidated pretax profit of 67.8 billion yen (\$685 million) on revenues of 658.3 billion yen (\$6.65 billion) in fiscal 1993.

Saudi Arabia prequalifies firms for phosphate project

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's minerals department has prequalified 10 Saudi and foreign firms to bid for a \$1.7 billion phosphate mining and fertiliser project, one of several mineral schemes it wants the private sector to invest in.

Industry experts said the firms would bid for the project to mine 4.5 million tonnes of phosphates annually at the Al Jalamid deposit in northern Saudi Arabia.

"It is a long process and probably there will not be a decision by the ministry for months," said one expert in Saudi Arabia.

The ministry estimates the project would cost a total \$1.74 billion — \$741 million in set-up costs, \$877 million for a fertiliser plant in the industrial city of Jubail and \$147 million for mining — the experts said.

A feasibility study showed there was an estimated 21 million tonnes of phosphate reserves at Al Jalamid, they added.

Five local and five foreign firms have prequalified. The experts named foreign prequalifiers as Japan's Marubeni Corporation, a joint venture between the Saudi Oger conglomerate and Turkey's Tefken and three German companies — Krupp Fortertechnik, Koch Transporttechnik GMBH and KHD Humboldt Wedag A.G., an affiliate of Kolecner Humboldt-Deutz A.G.

The phosphate plan is one of several to tap Saudi Arabia's mineral riches. Experts say Riyadh has recently shown greater interest in developing the sector as part of plans to diversify its oil-dependent economy.

The kingdom already mines gold.

The experts said the ministry has also asked local and foreign investors to come forward for a project worth \$550-\$700 million to produce 2.2-4.0 million tonnes a year of iron ore pellets from deposits in Wadi Sawawin.

It is also seeking investment of up to \$55 million to evaluate bauxite reserves at Al Zabirah believed to exceed 100 million tonnes. Major aluminium smelters in the Gulf region have so far had to import their bauxite-based raw materials from as far away as Australia.

A U.S. firm, Arabian Shield Development Co. is setting up an \$81 million joint mining venture to produce copper, zinc, gold and silver, the first of its kind in the Gulf.

Production was expected to start by mid-1996 with a yearly output of 58,000 tonnes of zinc concentrates with 54 per cent zinc per tonne and 35,000 tonnes of copper concentrates with 25 per cent copper per tonne. It also expects production of 22,000 ounces of gold and 800,000 ounces of silver per year.

They said the private sector is expected to play a big role in the minerals sector and Saudi Arabia's new five-year development plan, due to be published this year, highlights the need to develop the kingdom's minerals.

Kuwait investment firm buys property stake

KUWAIT (R) — A Kuwaiti investment company has bought a majority stake in a local property firm from the government under a privatisation programme, the stock exchange said.

Kuwait Investment Projects Company (KIPCO) bought 220 million shares or 52 per cent of United Real Estate Company's equity at 125 fils per share (1,000 fils equals one dinar, worth \$3.3) at a public auction, a statement by the exchange said.

KIPCO agreed to sell on to the public 120 million shares at a seven per cent discount, the exchange said. This would be done within 30 days of KIPCO signing relevant formalities with the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the state's investment arm.

Another company indicated an intention to compete for the stake at the auction but withdrew "at the last minute," the statement said without giving further details.

The aim of the sale is to attract local capital to the investment market. The shares sold represent 90 per cent of KIA's holding in the company.

United Real Estate made net profit of 3.047 million dinars (\$10 million) in calendar 1993, a 580 per cent rise from profit of 448,000 dinars (\$1.49 million) in 1992.

The company was one of several listed on the exchange in a difficult debt settlement programme launched in 1993 that offered generous forgiveness of up to 75 per cent to 9,546 corporate and individual debtors, brokers said.

The terms enabled some borrowers to book as a profit bad loans provisions they no longer required.

In 1991 the government announced plans to sell its stake in 60 local firms to give the private sector a bigger role in the stagnant non-oil economy and refill Gulf war-depleted coffers.

In a similar move in December the KIA sold 60 million of its shares in Al Ahli Bank, more than 10 per cent of the bank's total shares, to Kuwaiti investors.

Al Ahli, hard hit by a stock exchange collapse in 1982, last year returned to profit after long being considered a prime candidate for a merger with another local bank.

KIPCO, in which the Kuwaiti government has a 17 per cent stake, owns 97 per cent of Bahrain-based United Gulf Bank. It also conducts real estate and direct investment in America, Europe and Asia.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date: 14/2/95	Tokyo Close Date: 15/2/95
Sterling Pound	1.5825	1.5828**
Deutsche Mark	1.5811	1.5813
Swiss Franc	1.2740	1.2755**
French Franc	5.2268	5.2390**
Japanese Yen	98.54	98.57
European Currency Unit	1.2493	1.2475**

* USD Per STG

** European Opening at 0900 A.M. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates

Date: 15/2/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.00	6.31	6.93
Sterling Pound	6.37	6.76	6.87	7.05
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.00	5.45
Swiss Franc	5.37	5.65	5.87	6.25
French Franc	5.31	5.56	5.87	6.37
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.06	2.15	2.25
European Currency Unit	5.71	5.93	6.25	6.87

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding 1 M. Dollars, 100m,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals

Date: 15/2/1995

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	376.65	7.25	Silver	4.77	0.111

* 31 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 15/2/1995

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6990	0.7010
Sterling Pound	1.0899	1.0953
Deutsche Mark	0.3625	0.3634
Swiss Franc	0.5477	0.5504
French Franc	0.1334	0.1341
Japanese Yen	0.7013	0.7116
Dutch Guilder	0.4126	0.4147
Swedish Krona	0.0456	0.0458
Italian Lira	0.0456	0.0458
Belgian Franc	0.0456	0.0458

* Per 100

Other Currencies

Date: 15/2/1995

Currency	Buy	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8380	1.8510
Lebanese Lira	0.041750	0.042750
Saudi Riyal	0.1857	0.1871
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3300	2.3650
Qatari Riyal	0.1908	0.19207
Egyptian Pound	0.9000	0.9150
Omani Riyal	1.8660	1.8160
UAE Dirham	0.1898	0.1907
Greek Drachma	0.2775	0.3125
Cypriot Pound	1.4375	1.5240

* Per 100

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER - JORDAN - SINGAPORE				
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 661170				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 15/02/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	260	48695	187.500	187.250
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1800	7764	4.300	4.310
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	600	2535	4.250	4.220
THE HOUSING BANK	1250	3213	2.650	2.650
JORDAN ACHART BANK	3100	18601	6.020	6.010
JORDAN GULF BANK	492	1468	3.000	2.990
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	252	158	1.420	1.480

Hingis cashes in on Maleeva mistakes

PARIS (Agencies) — Switzerland's 14-year-old tennis sensation Martina Hingis came safely through her latest test as a tour professional on Tuesday by beating the experienced Katerina Maleeva of Bulgaria in straight-sets in the first round of the \$460,000 Paris Indoor Open.

The Czech-born teenager produced a 6-4, 6-4 baseline victory over a player desperately searching to recover the form which once made her number six in the world rankings.

There was nothing spectacular about Hingis' performance, and both players made some howling errors. But the young Swiss prodigy held on grimly when it mattered most and surged back from 0-2 to 5-2 in the second set.

Often Maleeva, currently ranked 30th, was her own worst enemy, losing concentration on vital points as she complained about crowd movement and flash photography.

But she was also victim of some controversial calls.

The worst of these came at 4-4 in the first set when Maleeva, serving at 40-15, had a line call overruled by the umpire.

The furious Bulgarian, whose younger sister Magdalena was a surprise winner in Chicago last week, vented her frustration by screaming abuse at the official and later by slamming the ball at the backstop.

Hingis, who has risen to 68th in the rankings and who has already beaten such experienced players as Helena Sukova of the Czech Republic and American Meredith McGrath in her seven tournaments since turning professional after her 14th birthday last September, now plays the winner of the all-French clash between last year's finalist Julie Halard and Sarah Pitkowski.

If she can come safely through that match she could well face returning top-seed Steffi Graf for a place in the semi-finals.

Graf, who has been out of action for three months with back and calf injuries and who is seeded to face Mary Pierce of France in Sunday's final, plays her first match against Elena Makarova of Russia.

Makarova beat Larisa Neiland of Latvia 6-1, 6-2.

In the day's other matches Australian qualifier Rennae Stubbs notched up a surprise when she beat experienced Sandra Cecchini of Italy 6-3, 2-6, 6-3.

Stubbs, who at 227th is the lowest-ranked player in the draw, now plays second seed Mary Pierce.

Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands defeated Wiltrud Probst of Germany 6-4,



Karel Novacek

6-2 and home player Alexia Dechaume-Balleret reached the second round after just four games when her 27th-ranked opponent Leila Meskhi pulled up in tears with an injury to her left heel.

Meskhi had problems with the same injury at the Australian Open.

In the day's final matches last year's finalist Julie Halard recovered to beat off a spirited challenge from 19-year-old French compatriot Sarah Pitkowski, and another home player Nathalie Tauziat saw off Meredith McGrath of the United States.

Halard was nearly caught unawares by the plucky aggression of her red-haired opponent but weathered the early storm to score a 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 victory.

"She fought really well and I was slow to adapt," said Halard, adding: "But I am playing very well by the end and I'm feeling good."

Looking forward to her match against Hingis, Halard shrugged: "Her age doesn't come into it, she is a good player and she has had some good results so I am expecting a difficult match."

Tauziat proved too steady

for McGrath and scored a 6-4, 6-4 win.

Seeds fail in Milan Indoor

In Milan Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov easily defeated Czech Karel Novacek Tuesday in a first-round match at the \$678,900 Muratti Time Indoor tennis tournament.

Kafelnikov, 20, the No. 5 seed, downed Novacek 6-4, 6-2 at Assago Forum to earn a second-round berth against Slovak Karol Kucera.

The Russian, who has climbed to 10th in the ATP rankings in his third year on the professional circuit, displayed a strong serve and precise backhand passing shots against the 29-year-old Slovak.

Kafelnikov, a losing quarter-finalist against Andre Agassi in the Australian Open this year, dominated the match throughout and seemed to lack concentration at times, losing four games in which led 40-0.

In other first-round matches, two seeded players, Australian Jason Stoltenberg and Spaniard Alex Corretja, were ousted from the tournament.

Stoltenberg, seeded seventh, lost 6-2, 7-5 to Russian Alexander Volkov, who will face French veteran Guy Forget in the second round.

The eighth-seeded Corretja, playing his second tournament of the year, was knocked out by Frenchman Olivier Delat, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1.

Sixth-seeded Petr Korda of the Czech Republic rallied to defeat Dutch qualifier Jan Hendrik Davids, 6-7 (3-7), 6-2, 6-3.

Top-seeded Boris Becker, warming up for his first singles match, teamed with Forget in the doubles.

The French-German pair defeated the Spanish duo of Tomas Carbonell and Francisco Roig 6-1, 7-6 (9-7).

Becker, who faces Swiss qualifier Lorenzo Mantia night, is shooting for his 44th career tournament win and his fifth title in nine years in Milan.

Second-seeded Goran Ivanisevic, crushed by Becker in the Germany-Croatia Davis Cup match earlier this month, also begins action against Czech Daniel Vacek.

The Milan Indoor awards a top prize of \$128,000.

Sanchez not overwhelmed by ranking

NEW YORK (R) — Armatia Sanchez Viario declares that being the world's new number one player won't overwhelm her.

"I'm not going to put any pressure on myself," Sanchez told Reuters backstage at Radio City Music Hall at an award show where she was named Women's Tennis Player of the Year. "I just want to play as well as I can and see what happens."

Sanchez became the first Spaniard to be ranked number one when she replaced Steffi Graf in the top spot earlier this month.

"I couldn't be happier and I will never forget Feb. 6 when it became official," Sanchez Viario said.

"It's a dream come real for me to become number one and all the sacrifice and hard work is paying off now," said the bubbly 24-year-old.

Sanchez knows that beginning with her return to the tour later this month at Indian Wells, she will be put to the test in every match to remain on top.

"The hardest part is to stay there and you have to play consistent," she said. "I don't know how long I will be there but I will definitely keep working and fighting as much as I can. Hopefully I can continue for a long time."

Sanchez dismisses the suggestion that her rise to the top was due to the continued absence of Monica Seles and Graf's injury troubles.

Seles has not played since being stabbed on court in Hamburg, Germany, nearly two years ago. Graf was slowed by a back injury through the second half of 1994 and was sidelined by a leg injury that forced her to miss the Australian Open last month.

"It's not because they are not there," Sanchez said. "I worked really hard and nobody gave me anything for free."

Sanchez Viario won eight singles titles last year, including her first U.S. Open crown and a second French Open title. She had a 74-9 won-lost match record.

After opening this season with a loss to Mary Pierce in the Australian Open final, Sanchez has been practicing at home and in Florida with one thought in mind.

"I want to come back really strong so I can defend my number one ranking."

Von Almsick, Popov win

MALMO, Sweden (AP) — World champion Franziska Von Almsick easily won the 200-metre freestyle event Tuesday, the first of two-day World Cup short course competition. The German star was clocked at 1 minute, 56.77 seconds, more than two seconds faster than second-placed Malin Nilsson of Sweden, who set a new national record of 1:58.88. Von Almsick placed third in the 50-metre freestyle, clocking 25.91 seconds. Sweden's 17-year-old Johanna Sjoberg won the event on 25.46. Denmark's Britta Vestergaard won the 200-metre medley at 2:10.86, smashing her one-year-old Nordic record of 2:11.23. In the men's events, Alexander Popov, Russia's Olympic and world champion, easily won the 100-metre freestyle on 48.41 ahead of Sweden's Fredrik Letzler and New Zealander Danyon Loader.

Atkinson moves to Coventry

LONDON (R) — Flamboyant former Manchester United and Aston Villa boss Ron Atkinson took over as manager of English Premier League side Coventry on Wednesday following the departure of Phil Neal 24 hours earlier. The experienced Atkinson, who also had a spell in charge of Atletico Madrid in 1988, will be plunged straight back into the battle to avoid relegation. He becomes the fifth manager in as many years at Coventry — fifth from bottom of the Premier League — three months after he was sacked by Aston Villa because his team failed to climb out of the relegation zone.

Chinese favour Romario

BEIJING (R) — Chinese sports fans picked Brazilian soccer star Romario as their sportsman of 1994. Xinhua news agency reported Wednesday. A nationwide poll put Russian swimmer Alexander Popov and Chinese woman swimmer Le Jingyi, who both won gold medals at the World Championships in Rome last year, second and third. Athletes Nouredine Morceli of Algeria and American Jackie Joyner-Kersey were fifth and sixth respectively with world heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman sixth. The variety of sports and nationalities in the list reflects the enthusiasm in China for many sports, with soccer the most popular, and their extensive coverage by state television.

Branco to fight Woodhall

PERUGIA, Italy (AP) — Silvio Branco of Italy will fight Britain's Richie Woodhall for the vacant European middleweight title on February 22 in Telford, England, his manager Silverio Gresta said Tuesday. "He's a clever boxer but lacks a big punch," said Branco. "He won't go the distance." The Italians wanted a home fight but British promoter Mickey Duff offered a bigger purse.

'Mad Max' sues for slander

HOUSTON (AP) — Vernon Maxwell, who slugged a heckler during a National Basketball Association (NBA) game last week, is now suing the man he punched for slander. Maxwell, a guard for reigning NBA champion Houston, filed a federal lawsuit claiming Steve George and his brother slandered him by "maliciously accusing him of a crime, namely assault." George's attorney, Dick Maizels, dubbed the suit an "interesting twist." "Mad Max" was suspended for 10 games without pay and fined \$20,000 for racing into the 12th row and punching George in the jaw during a timeout at Portland, Oregon. Maxwell said George yelled racial and obscene insults about Maxwell's family, which could cost him a total of \$265,000, to NBA commissioner David Stern.

Johnson wins 110m hurdles

MOSCOW (AP) — American Allen Johnson set a world best in the 110-metre hurdles Tuesday at the Russian winter track and field championships, winning with a clocking of

13:34 seconds. The distance is not often run indoors where the world hurdles records are recognised at 50 metres or 60 metres. Olympic champion Mark McKoy, formerly of Canada, now an Austrian citizen, was second 0:04 seconds behind Johnson. McKoy holds the world record at 50 metres. Russian walker Mikhail Shchennikov set a record in the 5-kilometre walk, circling a wooden track in 18:07.08 minutes. In the meet's biggest surprise, pole vaulter Sergei Bubka finished third, behind Radion Gataullin and Maxim Tarasov.

New baseball league picks cities

NEW YORK (AP) — The United League, the first rival to Major League Baseball since 1915, named its first six franchise cities here on Tuesday. The fledgling league will kick off next year in Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Vancouver, Canada and Washington. "We have had highly positive reactions in a great number of locations, and have made a decision at this time regarding these six," said former U.S. congressman Bob Mrazek, one of the league's founders. "We now have one half of the franchises we need to put in place to have a viable league." Each club costs five million dollars, with additional start-up costs of \$20 million expected per club.

Heider signs for Arsenal

LONDON (R) — Arsenal manager George Graham took his transfer spending to six million pounds (\$9.3 million) in a month on Tuesday when he signed Dutch international winger Glenn Helder from Vitesse Arnhem. Graham is striving to salvage his team's disastrous domestic season, in which he is also under F.A. investigation over allegations he received a \$25,000 pounds (\$442,700) transfer "kickback." Last month Graham paid a total of four million pounds (\$6.2 million) for strikers John Hartson and Chris Kiwomya from Luton and Ipswich respectively.

Blundell to drive for Gulf McLaren

LONDON (R) — British Formula One driver Mark Blundell is to join the Gulf McLaren sportscar team for this year's Le Mans 24 hours, the team said on Tuesday. Blundell, who won at Le Mans for Peugeot in 1992, will head the team's assault on the French Classic. He will partner Briton Ray Belin and Maurício Sala of Brazil in one of six McLaren F1 GTR cars. Blundell is still looking for a drive in this year's Formula One World Championship after spending 1994 with Tyrrell.

Kamsky enters final

SANGHINAGAR, India (AP) — American grandmaster Gata Kamsky entered the finals of the World Chess Championships on Wednesday outplaying Valery Salov of Russia by an overwhelming 5-1.5 margin. Kamsky drew his seventh game, with Russian grandmaster. He won five games against Salov who could beat him in only one game. One game ended in a draw. There are 10 games scheduled but the first player to earn 5.5 points wins. In the other semifinals, Anatoly Karpov of Russia is leading Boris Gelfand of Belarus 3.5-2.5.

More Malaysian footballers held in probe

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Malaysian police arrested four more footballers on Wednesday in a continuing crackdown on soccer corruption to clean up the sport before the new national league season starts in April. The four — Asbullah Mahamad, 24, B. Sathiaselvam, 32, Naina Mohamad, 31, and Shaari Said, 31 — were detained in the southwestern Negeri Sembilan state. The latest arrests bring the total number of footballers detained in Malaysia to 66 since the start of a campaign late last year to rid the local sport of rampant match-fixing. Two former coaches have also been arrested.

Sampras' coach has rare brain tumor

CHICAGO (AP) — U.S. tennis coach Tim Gullikson is to undergo brain surgery to remove a rare kind of tumor, but he should be back on the tennis circuit soon, his doctors said here.

Ill health forced Gullikson, 43, to return early to Chicago, his home town, from the Australian Open in January.

Initial hospital tests revealed a congenital heart malfunction but in a statement, neurologist James Auman said: "After undergoing a series of tests, Tim Gullikson was found to have

a small brain tumor known as oligodendroglioma.

"This type of tumor responds very well to treatment. Tim is at home, is doing well and is expected to return to coaching tennis in the near future."

Doctors said he would soon be fit to resume coaching his star pupil, Pete Sampras, the U.S. world number one.

Auman said Gullikson would need a brain operation and possibly radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Medical sources said hun-

dreds of similar cases are detected each year in the United States and one in three sufferers survives at least five years.

Hospital spokesman Ed Tate said the decision to announce the diagnosis was taken by Gullikson's family, partly to protect Sampras, who is playing a tournament in Memphis this week.

The player was deeply disturbed by Gullikson's health problems in Australia, breaking down in tears during his quarter-final against compatriot Jim Courier.



Russian Oleg Marchenko (left) avoids a blow from French Jean-Baptiste Mendy, to hit back late Tuesday during their European lightweight match in the Paris suburban town of

Pacers slow d

LONDON (R) — The Indiana Pacers slowed down Tuesday but they couldn't stop the lead by Dennis Rodman, who scored 18 points and 16 rebounds, capped a five-game break against Indiana on Tuesday, returning to the All-Star break to tie for the NBA's best (38-10).

Shaquille O'Neal was held to season-low 15 points, but he led in a 15-0 third-quarter burst that gave the Pacers a 104-90 lead for the third time in four outings.

The Pacers had beaten the Magic in their last two season meetings and the Magic in a three-game first-round playoff last year they beat us fair square, but this year we have a new team." Arnette said. "Tonight we can play a lot

of basketball. We made such a commitment to stop Shaquille inside, it's going to come things open on the outside," said Orlando coach Stan Van Gundy.

Van Gundy earlier in the season had beaten the Magic to Houston and then to Portland but got no credit for the win. The Rockets coped

with a 27-point lead in the third quarter, but the Magic held on for a 106-99 victory. The Rockets had a three-point lead in the fourth quarter but got no credit for the win. The Rockets had a three-point lead in the fourth quarter but got no credit for the win.

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Brazil's Dunga (left) and Romario relax with newspapers before a practice session (AFP photo)

Brazil summons World Cup stars

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil summoned Romario, Bebeto and seven other World Cup champions for an exhibition game against Slovakia next week.

National team coach Mario Zagalo announced on Tuesday the 22 players for the game Feb. 22 in Fortaleza, on Brazil's northeastern coast.

For the first time since last year's cup, Brazilians could see high-scoring forwards Bebeto and Romario together again. Romario is a near certainty, but Bebeto depends on an Ok from his Deportivo La Coruna club of Spain.

Also returning from the World Cup squad are Taffarel, Marcio Santos, Aldair, Branco, Ricardo Rocha, Dunga and Cafu.

Absent from the roster are World Cup starters Zinho and Jorginho, who transferred to Japan, and injured midfielder Mauro Silva of Deportivo La Coruna.

Zagalo also did not call players from Gremio or national champion Palmeiras, which play the same day in the Libertadores of America Cup. Among the all-stars on those teams are Danlei, Edmundo, Rivaldo and Roberto Carlos.

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH
©1994 Thriving Media Services Inc.
Neither vulnerable. South deals.
NORTH
♠ Q 9 5
♥ J 10 7 2
♦ A Q 8 5
♣ 4 3
EAST
♠ A 7 3
♥ K J 8 4
♦ 9 8
♣ K 10 4 2
SOUTH
♠ 10 6 2
♥ A K 5 4
♦ 9 6
♣ A K Q J
The bidding:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass
1 ♥ Pass 3 ♥ Pass
4 ♥ Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: Ace of ♠
When we were learning bridge, we were taught all those old axioms

like "Second hand low," "Don't finesse against partner," "Never give a ruff shift," as if they were immutable laws of life, engraved in stone. As we progressed, we discovered the only time to use "never" is to advise people against using it. For that reason, we were stopped. South could not open one no trump with a balanced 17 points. Since the North hand revealed to 11 points in support of hearts, North made an invitational jump to three hearts which South was happy to accept.

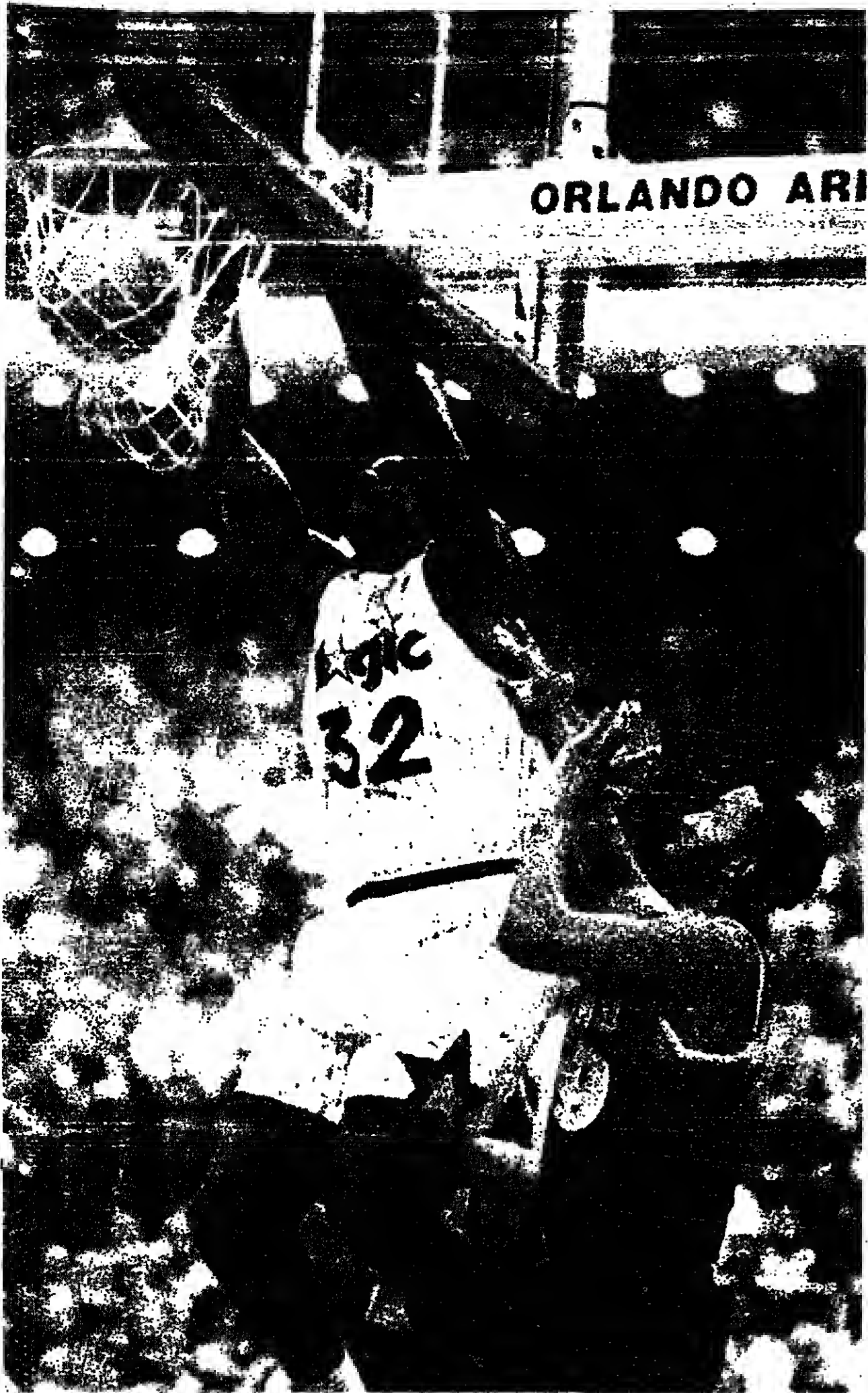
West led the ace of spades and, in response to partner's signal with the eight, continued the suit. The defenders quickly completed their book in the suit and then East, seizing the opportunity to "lead up to weakness," shifted to a club because to continue spades would present declarer with a ruff shift.

Declarer won in hand, finessed the queen of diamonds successfully, then ran the jack of hearts. When that won and trumps broke 3-2, making the rest of the tricks was simple.

Had East relied on logic rather than slogans, the defenders might have prevailed. At the very least, declarer had to hold the ace and king in both hearts and clubs. If the king of diamonds was missing, that card was finessable, so there were no more tricks available in the plain suits.

Under those circumstances, conceding a ruff shift could only help the defense, not hurt. Had East continued with the 13th spade, West's nine of trumps would have forced an honor from dummy and East would have been assured of the setting trick in trumps by simply covering any card led from the table.

Thiais, Mendy retained his European title by outpointing his challenger over 12 rounds (AFP photo)



Indiana Pacers #9 forward, Derrick McKee, looks on as Orlando Magic #32 center, Shaquille O'Neal, slam dunks a basket late in the first period of the game at the Arena in Orlando, FL, 14 February (AFP photo)

Pacers slow down Shaq but lose anyway

ORLANDO (R) — The Indiana Pacers slowed down Shaq, but they couldn't stop the Magic.

Orlando, led by Dennis Scott's 18 points and Horace Grant's 17 points and 16 rebounds, snapped a five-game losing streak against Indiana 111-92 on Tuesday, returning from the All-Star break to tie Phoenix for the NBA's best record (38-10).

Shaquille O'Neal was held to a season-low 15 points, but scored six in a 15-0 third-quarter burst that gave Orlando the lead for good.

Rik Smits scored 20 points and Reggie Miller 19 as the Pacers dropped their third game in four outings.

The Pacers had beaten Orlando in their last two regular-season meetings and swept the Magic in a three-game first-round playoff last year.

"Last year they beat us fair and square, but this year we have a new team," Antwan Hardaway said. "Tonight we showed that we can play a lot better."

"They made such a conscious effort to stop Shaquille down inside, it's going to give some things open on the perimeter," said Orlando coach Bob Hill.

A big trade earlier in the day sending veteran guard Clyde Drexler to Houston to power forward Otis Thorpe to Portland left both teams undermanned for the game. The Rockets coped

and the Trail Blazers didn't.

In Houston, the Rockets used a 18-0 first-quarter run to score a 124-104 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 26 points and Scott Brooks, one of three rookies to record career highs, added 23 for Houston.

Besides Thorpe, Houston was without starting forward Robert Horry and guard Vernon Maxwell. Horry was placed on the injured list with a score back while Maxwell is serving a 10-game suspension for assaulting a fan.

Drexler and Tracy Murray, also acquired in the deal, were attended the game but did not suit up.

In Dallas, Jamal Mashburn scored 27 points to lead the Mavericks past Portland 95-90 for just their third win in 14 games.

Rod Strickland scored 25 points for Portland, which had a three-game win streak snapped.

Portland's James Robinson missed a potential game-tying 3-pointer with four seconds left.

At Detroit, the Pistons ran up a 27-point lead over the New York Knicks in the first half, then held off a late rally for a 106-94 victory. The Knicks narrowed the lead to nine late in the fourth quarter but got no closer.

Grant Hill hit 11 consecutive shots at one point and had 25 points for Detroit,

which snapped a six-game losing streak against New York and has won six of its last nine games.

Patrick Ewing missed his first eight shots but recorded his 16th straight double-double (24 points, 15 rebounds) as New York lost for the third time in four games.

In San Antonio, David Robinson scored 29 points as the Spurs beat the reeling Utah Jazz 112-96.

Sean Elliott scored 20 points and Avery Johnson had 19 points and 10 assists for the Spurs, who have won nine of 10 games and pulled within 2½ games of first-place Utah in the Midwest. Utah has lost four of its last five.

In Seattle, Gary Payton and Detlef Schrempf hit back-to-back 3-pointers to snap a tie as the superstars beat the Golden State Warriors 118-108 and spoiled the debut of interim coach Bob Lanier, who replaced Don Nelson.

Payton scored 26 points and Shawn Kemp and Schrempf each added 21 for the Sonics, who have won six of their last seven.

The Warriors lost for the seventh time in nine games.

In Miami, the Heat defeated the Milwaukee Bucks 112-99 to make Alvin Gentry a winner in his first game as interim head coach in place of Kevin Loughery, fired earlier in the day.

Billy Owens scored 20

points for Miami.

At New Jersey, Armon Gilliam, starting in place of the injured Derrick Coleman, scored 26 points and Kenny Anderson, back after missing six games with an inflamed left forearm, added 18 as the Nets beat the Charlotte Hornets 109-98.

In Denver, the Atlanta Hawks rode a 27-10 first-quarter run to their third straight win, 99-88 over the Nuggets, who have lost three straight.

Steve Smith scored 30 points for Atlanta, which won for the fifth time in its last seven games.

At Minnesota, Calbert Cheaney scored 26 points as the Washington Bullets snapped a six-game losing streak with a 99-96 victory over the Timberwolves.

Minnesota lost for the seventh time in eight games.

In Sacramento, the Kings held off the Boston Celtics, 108-101.

RESULTS

New Jersey 109, Charlotte 98
Orlando 111, Indiana 92
Miami 112, Milwaukee 99
Detroit 106, New York 94
Washington 99, Minnesota 96
San Antonio 112, Utah 96
Dallas 95, Portland 90
Houston 124, L.A. Clippers 104
Atlanta 99, Denver 88
Seattle 118, Golden State 108
Sacramento 108, Boston 101

Foreman says will give Tyson a chance to fight

NEW YORK (AP) — George Foreman vs. Mike Tyson. Big George likes the sound of it, as long as...

— Tyson gets out of jail as scheduled on March 25.

Foreman beats Axel Schulz on April 22 in the first defense of his heavyweight championship.

And Don King stays out of it.

"I can't put up with Don King in my life," Foreman said. "I've got too many kids already."

The 46-year-old Foreman was in New York on Tuesday to officially announce his first title defense since 1974. He will fight the 26-year-old Schulz, a former East German amateur champion, at the MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas.

"I heard Tyson was getting out of the jailhouse pretty quick, and he said if he gets out today, he'll whip George tomorrow," Foreman said. "I'd like to give him that opportunity."

"If he doesn't sign up with Don King again, it will happen before the end of the year. If I beat Axel Schulz, if Tyson gets out and if he gets away from Don King, it can happen. It would be the greatest show since P.T. and Barnum got together for their thing. But I've got to beat Axel Schulz first."

Foreman recaptured the title, becoming the oldest world heavyweight champion, last Nov. 5 with a 10th-round knockout of Michael Moorer, who held the WBA and IBF belts. When Tyson won the world title from Trevor Berbick in 1986 at age 20, he was the youngest world champion.

"If the youngest guy to



World Heavyweight Champion George Foreman (left) poses with Axel Schulz (right) from Bad Saezow, Germany, after a news conference in New York Tuesday to announce

become heavyweight champion fights me, the oldest guy, then I can prove this wasn't a fluke," Foreman said. "But if I look past Axel Schulz the way Michael Moorer looked past me, I won't get that chance."

"You see, Moorer believed everything he heard. George was old, and that's true. George was slow, and that's true. George can't punch, and that was a lie," Foreman said. "If you can still punch, you can still fight."

Foreman brings a record of 73-4 with 68 knockouts into the fight, while Schulz is 21-1-1 with 10 knockouts. In his last fight, Schulz won a 10-round decision over James "Bonecrusher" Smith in Germany on Sept. 17.

This will be Schulz's third fight in the United States. He scored a 10-round decision over Kimmuel Odum in Atlantic City, N.J. in 1993 and won a 10-rebound decision over Jack Basting in Chicago last June 18. The rest of his fights have been in Germany.

"I think youth and endurance will speak for me in the fight," Schulz said. "He is, of course, a legend, but that's an incentive more than anything else. I am not in awe of him in the least."

To televise the fight, HBO paid an estimated \$9 million rights fee, the highest in network history. It's small change compared with what Foreman-Tyson could generate.

Bob Arum, who is promoting the Foreman-Schulz fight,

said a Tyson bout could generate as much as \$250 million gross with \$100 million left to split among the contestants and the promotion.

"We have offered Mike Tyson the fight for a record amount, and he's very interested," Arum said. "The biggest fight out there for Mike Tyson is George Foreman. Tyson-Bowe is all right, but it's not momentous. If Tyson figures he can beat George Foreman, his time is now because the other guys are young and will still be around."

Foreman says he intends to fight to the end of the year, then call it quits.

"Of course, if Mike Tyson wants to fight, I'll give him a chance to get his act together," Foreman said.

Car racers stretch rules to squeeze a bit more speed

DAYTONA BEACH (AP) — With a timid smile and a nervous shuffle, former Winston Cup crew chief Gary Nelson all but admits he wasn't above stretching the rules to squeeze a little more speed out of his cars.

But the man now in charge of catching the rule-breakers for NASCAR had not seen anything like this.

Randy Lajoie's car had just finished a practice session last week when "inspectors" noticed his trunk lid wobbling as he pulled in to refuel. They

asked the crew to tighten it, but became suspicious when their efforts failed.

A closer look revealed the reason: The car was equipped with a hydraulic pump enabling the driver to lower the rear spoiler below the legal limit, reducing wind resistance to allow far greater speed.

It was an ingenious device, with a switch on the dashboard, the pump fastened next to the clutch and two lines running the length of the vehicle to the trunk lid.

"They had an electric motor that was driving the hydraulic pump to provide 2,000 pounds of hydraulic pressure to raise and lower the trunk lid," said Nelson. NASCAR's Winston Cup director, still marveling at the rule-breaking contraption. "I've never seen one that sophisticated."

Lajoie was fined \$10,000, and car owner Bill Davis \$25,000. But that was only the beginning of Nelson's work in what has been a rash of roguery prior to the season's first — and most prestigious — event, Sunday's Daytona 500.

In quick order over the past week:

— Car owner junior John-

son received a record \$45,000 fine, and Brett Bodine wasn't allowed to take part in the first round of qualifying after inspectors found that a part of the intake manifold wasn't welded to the engine as required. It allowed more air to flow through the engine, increasing horsepower.

— Joe Nemechek was fined \$5,000 for cutting illegal ridges in a filter to enhance air flow — another attempt to increase horsepower.

Crew chief Jeff Hammond, was fined \$5,000 after driver Greg Sacks crashed in the busch clash. Inspectors found 18 pounds of loose weight stashed in the cockpit in an attempt to improve the car's handling.

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Yusra, Mahmoud Hamedieh in The Immigrant		Mahmoud Hamida — Madiha Kamel — Hassan Al Asmar in Satan's Gate (Arabic)		CONCORD '1' SPECIALIST Shows: 12:30, 8:15 SPEED Shows: 2:45, 10:30 CONCORD '2' ROBOCOP '3'		SUM'A in the satirical play HI CITIZEN Composed and directed by Mohammad Al Shawafah Daily from 8:30 p.m. Children's Play The Ninja Turtles Show Directed by Akram Abul Ragheb Daily at 10:30 p.m.	Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Presents: The political satire: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m. For reservation, please call 625155 The theatre is closed on Saturdays & Sundays

World court agrees to rule in Gulf dispute

THE HAGUE (AP) — The World Court on Wednesday agreed to intervene in an offshore territorial dispute between Qatar and Bahrain that has verged on armed hostilities and heightened political divisions in the Gulf.

By a vote of 10-5, the court affirmed its authority to settle the long-running dispute, despite Bahrain's refusal to acknowledge its jurisdiction.

Bahrain backed up its rejectionist stance by boycotting the session of the World Court, formally known as the International Court of Justice.

The court also decided, by a vote of 10-5, that Qatar's application for a ruling in the dispute was admissible.

"The conflict between Qatar and Bahrain will now be solved through peaceful means," said Najeeb Al Naumi, Qatar's legal advisor.

"According to the laws of the court we have won."

By persisting with the court case, Qatar has continued its independent political stance within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a stance which gives offence to GCC heavyweights Saudi Arabia.

Saudi King Fahd has proposed that all border disputes in the GCC be settled by mediation within the group this year. Those include a border dispute between Qatar and the Saudi kingdom.

As to whether Bahrain ultimately takes part in the proceedings, Mr. Naumi said, "If it happens, that will be fine. But their absence will not obstruct the path of judgement."

Even if Bahrain continues its boycott, the court will consider the Gulf state subject to its verdict, and will notify it of all sessions and deadlines for submission of arguments.

But the 15-judge court has no enforcement powers and depends on voluntary compliance with its rulings.

Its high-profile verdicts carry considerable moral weight in the international community.

Now that the jurisdiction question is settled, it's likely to be many months, if not years, before a ruling is issued.

Saddam said to direct fighting in marshlands

CAIRO (Agencies) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has taken personal charge of the defence against Shiite rebels in Iraq's southern marshes to repulse a fierce attack on the army, rebel sources said Wednesday.

Hamid Al Bayati, a spokesman for the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), also said the weekend fighting stretched into skirmishes Tuesday near Iran and in opposite marshes around the towns of Souk Al Shuykh and Al Chibayshi.

Travellers reported the regime ordered a stepped up effort to drain the Howiza marshes to deny sanctuary to the Shiite rebels, Mr. Bayati said in a telephone interview from London.

By rebel accounts, the fighting Saturday and Sunday was the fiercest since the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

The official Iraqi News Agency, monitored in Cyprus, on Monday acknowledged "a large-scale attack" and accused neighbouring Iraq of backing the offensive. It said its forces repulsed the attack Sunday, inflicting heavy losses.

Opposition sources in Tehran and Damascus conceded hundreds of their forces were killed in a counter offensive by the elite Republican Guard and the army's Fourth Corps.

However, they said the rebels killed or wounded about 300 soldiers and 25 officers and took 350 prisoners, who were later released. The rebels also claimed 20 Iraqi army vehicles were destroyed.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said President Saddam went to the marsh area over the weekend to supervise the defence. An Iraqi diplomatic source, also demanding anonymity, confirmed President Saddam's role in the fighting.

Reports from Al Bayati's group and the Iraqi National Congress, an anti-Saddam group, said rebels were trying to seize the strategic town of Qurna on the main

The proceedings will include both written and oral arguments at the court housed in the turn-of-the-century Peace Palace, which was built with money donated by Scottish-American industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

Qatar took the dispute unilaterally to the World Court in 1991, claiming an agreement with Bahrain to submit the dispute to the court if Saudi mediation failed.

But Bahrain has consistently claimed that the memorandum of agreement signed jointly by the two states did not allow for a unilateral application to the U.N. judicial body.

"Both parties are bound by the procedural consequences," said the court in its ruling.

In announcing the boycott of Wednesday's session, the Bahrain Foreign Ministry again urged Qatar to negotiate the dispute bilaterally or submit it to the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"I'm disappointed by their absence," said Qatar's legal advisor. "How did they know they were going to lose?"

Led by Saudi Arabia, the GCC also includes Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasssem Al Thani, was quoted Monday as saying that Qatar will withdraw the case from the World Court if Saudi Arabian mediation comes up with "a solution satisfactory to the two sides."

The dispute over a strip of islands, reefs, offshore boundaries and coastal fishing rights flared in 1986 when Qatar military forces seized 29 employees of a Dutch construction firm building a Bahraini coast guard station on the Fasht Al Dibal reef.

They were released unharmed after 17 days.

Also contested is the northern Qatari town of Zubarah where ancestors of Bahrain's ruling family are buried.

The long-time employees of the Arab Bank quit in December over differences with Mr. Shoman over the handling of the case involving the Arab Bank and the Shahin investment group, one of the biggest holding companies in Jordan.

They objected to what was seen as the unprecedented softline approach by the management over the dispute with the group involving over JD 35 million.

According to the sources, the lawyers sent notice to Mr. Shoman informing him of the lawsuit. In the notice, they also asked Mr. Shoman to make statements to the local press removing doubt of the lawyers' credibility and competence.

According to the source, Mr. Shoman has not yet responded.

The operation could be part of a new strategy by SCIRI to topple President Saddam through intensifying military attacks in a bid to lure the army to their side.

Its leader, Mohammad Baqir Al Hakim, visited London last month to persuade other opposition groups to join the effort. He also went to Kuwait to seek financial backing from its rulers.

The group is believed to have some 8,000-9,000 armed men under their control in Iran, some of whom might have participated in the offensive.

But Mr. Bayati denied the attackers were coming from Iran, saying those who took part were opposition fighters operating inside Iraq.

Israeli newspapers, denouncing "Tehran's mini-state," on Wednesday accused Iran of instigating the fighting in southern marshes.

State-owned television on Tuesday night showed the scene of the fighting and interviewed prisoners taken by Iraqi troops during the clashes on Saturday and Sunday.

"The Iranian snake goes back to its old habit of biting when darkness falls," said an editorial in the influential newspaper Babel, owned by President Saddam's eldest son Uday.

The daily described the clashes as "acts of folly by Tehran's mini-satans."

Babel accused Iran of seeking to prolong U.N. sanctions, imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, by fabricating false stories.

The ruling Baath Party newspaper Al Thawra accused Iran in a signed commentary of "plotting against Iraq and flagrantly meddling in its internal affairs."

The Al Iraq daily warned Iran that "the destiny of the hand that dares to harm the great Iraq will be amputation."



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday hosted an iftar in honour of tribal leaders and representatives of public and private institutions in Maan Governorate. The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief

Ex-legal team sues Arab Bank chairman

By Ghadeer Taher

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Three prominent lawyers, who last month resigned from the Arab Bank in protest over the handling of a lawsuit against one of the bank's clients, are suing the chairman of the bank for libel, sources close to the case said Wednesday.

Court sources said that lawyers Ibrahim Bakr, Faris Nabulsi and Tarek Nabil filed their case in the Amman court of first instance last week against Arab Bank Chairman Abdul Majeed Shoman, who they claim, had questioned their competence in public statements made to the press, causing damage to their credibility.

According to court sources, the suit does not specify the amount of the claim. It is left to be determined by the court.

The long-time employees of the Arab Bank quit in December over differences with Mr. Shoman over the handling of the case involving the Arab Bank and the Shahin investment group, one of the biggest holding companies in Jordan.

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Reports from Al Bayati's group and the Iraqi National Congress, an anti-Saddam group, said rebels were trying to seize the strategic town of Qurna on the main

satellite from the U.S. capital last night to a Jordanian audience at the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies, trying to define the roots and implications of the Republican revolution now gaining momentum in the United States.

The Republican victory, she said, was a combination of a conservative tide and a government solidly anchored in gridlock.

"The conservative tide has been moving since as early as the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson," she said, "having only been interrupted by the election of two Democrats since (President Clinton and former president Jimmy Carter) — both southerners with a centrist or moderate campaign."

Ms. Drew spoke via

PNA police detain human rights lawyer

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Kabul government, Taliban hold talks

KABUL (Agencies) — The nominal government and the rapidly advancing Taliban militia held tense negotiations Wednesday in a bid to avert fresh fighting in the Afghan capital.

A United Nations peace plan calls for the formation of a multi-party governing council this weekend, but the proposal could be undermined if the two sides launch a new round of combat.

The Taliban, a recently formed Islamic faction made up of fundamentalist religious students, told President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces to pull back Wednesday to the southern edge of Kabul.

The government forces appeared to concede some ground Wednesday evening, though they still controlled the city's southern border. No major fighting was reported.

The Taliban scored a major victory Tuesday when they dislodged Hezbe-Islami, the main opposition group, from its base in Charasyab, 25 kilometres south of the city (see page 2).

As the Taliban took over the base, government troops advanced south towards Charasyab, and the two sides were only a short distance apart in some areas.

General Najib, a government military spokesman who used only one name, said there were negotiations with the Taliban through much of the day Wednesday, but he declined to divulge details.

Unknown until recently, the Taliban have put together a dramatic string of victories in recent weeks and now are considered the main opposition force in the multi-sided civil war.

They have blamed the other 10 factions for the destruction of Kabul and say the groups are corrupt and power-hungry. The Taliban have not made alliances with any of the other factions and say they want to impose strict sharia (Islamic Law). The other factions say they have the same goal.

He was freed after a 90-minute interview by Attorney General Khaled Al Kidra. "He was sent home after clarification" on a statement by the centre criticising Mr. Arafat's decision last week to set up a state security court, Mr. Kidra said.

"He was not arrested in the first place," he claimed. The centre's statement, which called for the court to be scrapped, was considered "provocation," he said.

"It was made clear that he (Surani) did not mean anything by it, and it's over now. We do not interfere in freedom of expression, unless we suspect there is a violation of the law," Mr. Kidra said.

Mr. Surani gave a different version. "There was no investigation. I made it clear that the communiqué was objective and part of our routine work on human rights."

"There was nothing to talk about, the communiqué was referred to but in my opinion there was no subject, and then they told me the issue was closed."

Mr. Surani's wife Amal told him plainclothes police took him from their Gaza City home after midnight. "They just said he had to go and that it was urgent orders from high up," she said.

After he was hauled off, the centre repeated its call to scrap the military security court, against which there will be no appeal, and told the authority to stop making arrests without due process.

The arrest of a prominent human rights lawyer confirms the dangerous state which the protection of human rights has now reached in the Palestinian autonomous areas," said the centre.

It was set up in 1985 by four lawyers to monitor abuses of human rights by the Israeli occupation forces, but began monitoring the Palestinian self-rule authority after it took charge last May.

The security sources said 48-year-old Eintour, alias Abu Ali Majed, headed the assassination branch of Abu Nidal's Fateh Revolutionary Council faction.

Lebanese military authorities blame Eintour for the 1987 hijack of a French yacht off the Gaza Strip and holding five Belgians and a Frenchwoman with their daughters on board hostage for up to three years.

Eintour also was suspected of masterminding the assassination of Jordanian diplomat Naeb Imran Maaytah in Beirut Jan. 29, 1994. Three confessed Abu Nidal activists have been sentenced to life imprisonment in the case.

The Abu Nidal statement said Eintour was arrested Feb. 4 in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley of eastern Lebanon and not in Sidon.

It called on Lebanese authorities to free Eintour in the spirit of solidarity and unity among those not locked into peace deals with Israel.

Lebanon and Syria, its powerful neighbour, are the only two Arab frontline states which have not signed a peace deal with Israel.

Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians have signed peace accords with the Jewish state.

Eintour was being held at a maximum security jail in the Defence Ministry in the Beirut suburb of Yaze.

Abu Nidal, whose real name is Sabri Al Banna, tops the most wanted lists in a number of Arab countries as well as Europe and the United States for attacks that have left scores of civilians and diplomats dead. His organisation for years was backed by Libyan leader Moammar Qadhafi.

Most infamous is the 1985 gun assault on passenger terminals at Rome and Vienna airports which killed 17 people.

crime bill (which included the controversial ban on automatic assault weapons) pass while Republicans have been quick to point out that the president had not made good on his promise of welfare reform.

While welfare reform may have played second fiddle to health care reform, Ms. Drew said, "Clinton did offer a welfare package — but instead, people now think he missed this opportunity."

It was not yet clear whether the Taliban were interested in making a deal with President Rabbani's forces, or if they will try to attack the city.

Mahmoud Mestiri, the head of the United Nations special mission to Afghanistan, said he plans to travel from neighbouring Pakistan to Kabul on Saturday to help implement the U.N. peace plan.

It calls for Mr. Rabbani to resign, making way for a multi-party governing council. A ceasefire also is to take effect.

The Taliban, while expressing interest in the U.N. plan, have not yet agreed to participate.

Afghanistan's Islamic factions have been battling each other since ousting a communist government in 1992.

Pakistan's interior minister Naseerullah Babar on Wednesday denied claims that his country had provided aid to the Taliban.

In a statement, quoted by the official Associated Press of Pakistan, Mr. Babar underlined Pakistan's neutrality in the tussle between the various warring Afghan factions, led by the Hezbe-Islami and the forces loyal to President Rabbani.

"Pakistan has remained neutral in the internal strife of Afghanistan and will remain so in future," he said in Karachi.

He said that whatever government finally emerged in Kabul, it would be "pro-Pakistan" as Afghanistan was dependent on Pakistan for food and other supplies as well as transit trade with other states.

The Taliban were originally religious students in Pakistan, which still shelters more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees.

Their strength has dramatically increased to an estimated 25,000 over the past six months while public support for them has increased in Afghanistan, making them a political and military force to be reckoned with.

Abu Nidal group blames Jordan, denies top assassin arrested

BEIRUT (AP) — The Abu Nidal Palestinian organisation on Wednesday denied that an activist arrested by Lebanese security forces was the group's top assassin.

In a statement delivered to news media in Beirut, the group said the alleged assassin, Mahmoud Khaled Eintour, was nothing more than a senior social worker in Palestinian refugee camps across Lebanon.

"All the accusations against him are false," said the statement.

It blamed Jordanian intelligence for what it called "instigating and fabricating information" to frame Eintour and sow dissent among factions opposed to Jordan's peace treaty with Israel.

Eintour, a Palestinian with a Jordanian passport, was arrested at his house in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanese security sources disclosed Friday.

The security sources said 48-year-old Eintour, alias Abu Ali Majed, headed the assassination branch of Abu Nidal's Fateh Revolutionary Council faction.

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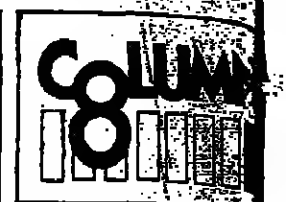
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Clinton became un-



Bishop asks taxman to play Cupid

LONDON (AFP) — Second most senior man in England, Archbishop of York John Hume Tuesday used Sunday's Day to urge the government to lighten the tax burden on married couples.

"Selfish communities, a bit of social support, churchmen told the 'Society seems to be through the tax system' (marriage) doesn't," he said.

"There is such emphasis in recent years on the duty of partners and on the whole cohabitating couples as they were married."

"Those who are looking the possibility of marriage actually getting married," said the churchman.

Relate, whose spokesman Denise Knowles said, "It pulls the rug under the love. Marriage for tax purposes would be like a lottery for money."

least, he hopes to be the archbishop's main premise that support for marriage is falling in Britain. According to statistics published at the start of the month, the number of marriages in England fell to below the level of 300,000 the first time in 40 years.

Bardot mourns British animal activist

LONDON (R) — Voice actress and 60s sex symbol Brigitte Bardot joined more than 1,000 mourners at a funeral of a British rights activist who died in a demonstration weeks ago. Jill Phipps was crushed under the wheel of a lorry carrying veal calves to a slaughterhouse in a rural England. She was part in nationwide demonstrations against the export of live animals for slaughter, an very sad this has happened," said Ms. Bardot who lives in the south of France. "I am here for Ms. Phipps had been one about 30 people protesting the airport, from which calves are sent by air to the continent."

There they are often tiny veal crates to create der white meat — a now outlawed in Britain. Bardot, who devotes her life to campaigning animal rights, described Phipps in a French newspaper last week as the "Arc of the calves." The mer screen goddess, long blonde hair and bewitched millions of goes in films such as God Created Woman, turned her back on beauty in 1973 to live as a nun with a menagerie of dogs and horses. She is an animal protectionist, the Brigitte Bardot Foundation, in 1987, auctioned off her jewellery to help.

Phoney Chinese university closes down for fraud

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese authorities have closed a phony university that had accepted applicants out of 500 yuan (\$116,000) after changing its registered name in July, a report said Tuesday. The non-government Shaanxi University of Comprehensive Training, approved in 1992, authorised of grant level certificates of a degree, the China Daily Last year it renamed Shaanxi Comprehensive University, seal and, without notice, began recruiting students nationwide with false promise of being state-level universities, it said. The charged applicants 400 yuan more than the approved by the government for its two-year program and subsequently postponed courses refusing to grant degrees. The report said the 430,000 yuan has now returned to